

THAT OLD BALCH MAGIC!

With the Synapse DVD release of Antony Balch's *Bizarre*, aka *Secrets of Sex*, we turn the spotlight on the brief but fascinating career of one of Britain's least-known cult movie directors...



You've probably never heard of Antony Balch, unless of course you're a clued-in devotee of late 60s/early 70s cult horror and sex movies. His output was small but significant, the best-known of his productions being *Horror Hospital*, an outrageous early splatter flick shot in Battersea Town Hall!

Balch was a fan of exploitation movies from a very early age. In 1951, at the age of 14, he was taken backstage to meet Bela Lugosi, on tour in the UK as *Dracula*. Inspired to make his own movies, it wasn't long before he broke into the industry as a production assistant on shorts. His first solo effort was a commercial for Kit-E-Kat which promised, 'Your cat will stay younger, live longer...'

It was while he was working on a subtitling assignment in Paris that Balch met William Burroughs, who was to be an inspiration to him in many ways. The pair collaborated on *Towers Open Fire* (1963), an 11-minute collage of Burroughs themes and situations. Burroughs supplied soundtrack narration and appeared as a junkie.

The same year Balch set himself up as a distributor after acquiring the rights to the long-banned Tod Browning movie, *Freaks*. When it opened on a double bill with Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie*, *Towers Open Fire* was the supporting short. Balch was also responsible for reissuing the Swedish silent classic *Haxan* as *Witchcraft Through The Ages*, and he cannily renamed the French sci-fi thriller *Traitement de Choc* as *Doctor In The Nude* to make a very tidy profit in London sex cinemas!

Balch also worked as a movie programmer for The Times cinema in Baker Street, where he would deliberately pair quirky movies that were often more to his own taste than that of the audiences. Meanwhile he was persevering with his own filmmaking and after filming *The Cut-Ups*, another odd, arty short with Burroughs he tried to get a feature version of *The Naked Lunch* off the ground. When this came to nothing he pressed ahead with *Secrets of Sex* in 1970.

Newly released by the US-based Synapse label, this uniquely strange softcore sex epic is a collection of sex tales told by a mummified Arab - voiced by Radio's *The Man In Black*, Valentine Dyall (best known for his creepy turn in *City Of The Dead*).

The mummy rattles on while go-go girls strip and "When The Saints Go

Marching In" plays on the soundtrack. Six tales unfold. The first has a lady photographer (Dorothy Grumbine) murdering a young guy so she can take pictures for a history of torture. Next, a couple give birth to a monster baby. Then a young man reading Genet collars a burglar and discovers to his delight that she's a sexy young filly who's





happy to do some community service on the spot.

The fourth tale stars popular 60s pin-up Maria Frost as secret agent Lindy Leigh out to steal papers from a military attaché. At one point she goes to the cinema and watches *Bedroom Beauties Of 1929*, a spoof of a vintage nudie starring Nicole Austin. Another word from the mummy and we're off to the flat of a trendy young man who has just rung for a call girl. Sue Bond arrives and they start to get friendly, but suddenly a huge lizard appears and our heroine makes her excuses and leaves! Finally, genteel old lady Laurelle Streeter shows her new valet round the greenhouse and reveals that she has trapped the souls of her lovers in the flowers during sexual intercourse. "Misappropriation of men's souls is a very serious crime," says the valet, and promptly strangles her. Censor John Trevelyan was horrified and cut nine minutes of the deleted footage has been restored to the Synapse disc) but this fascinating obscurity is quite witty in places and has much to recommend it to those in search of something truly different.

Balch's next feature was the aforementioned *Horror Hospital*. A lurid mixture of Hammer Horror and X-rated *Carry On* movie, this outrageous gore comedy stars slack-jawed *Confessions* hero Robin Askwith as a gormless pop singer who decides to take a vacation with "Hairy Holidays," a disreputable



agency run by raving queen Dennis Price. He ends up booked in at a horrible health resort run by the sinister Dr. Storm (Michael Gough), a mad doctor who chops people's heads off with blades hidden in the side of his Rolls Royce. Surprisingly gory for its time, the film features motorcycle zombies and dwarfs and literally buckets of blood. My favourite moment is when Askwith comes across a blood-soaked bed and is told: "One of our guests had a bad night..."

Released on a double-bill with *The Corpse Grinders*, *Horror Hospital* was quite a financial success, but it was to be the last movie that Balch ever made. At a 1979 party, a friend said, "Tony, you don't look too good. Are you all right?"

"No," replied Balch. "Didn't you know? I'm dying." In April 1980 he died of cancer, aged just 43.

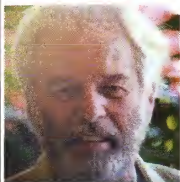
Had he lived there's no doubt that Balch would have made many more enjoyably quirky exploitation movies, and maybe some significant 'quality' films too. That was sadly not to be, but now, thanks to the Synapse DVD restoration we

can enjoy one of his most obscure early epics plus his early William Burroughs shorts, *Towers Open Fire* and *The Cut Ups*, which are included as valuable extras on the disc, along with a video interview with the film's writer Elliott Stein and an informative audio commentary by producer Richard Gordon and film historian Tom Weaver. •

SANTA AND HIS SLAY!



Would the dust's going on here, or are these chickens? That boy is suspected in Santa Sangre



Allan Bryce shares a psychedelic encounter with legendary filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky, director of Santa Sangre...

possibly Jodorowsky's most "accessible" film, and Anchor Bay's double DVD gives it the best possible showcase. Joda says he doesn't have a DVD player himself, but he appreciates the effort.

Born in 1930 in Iquique, Chile, Alejandro had an enigmatic childhood before travelling to Paris in 1953 to study mime with Marcel Marceau. During the 1960s, he experimented with mimes and cartooning. Together with French surrealists Fernanda Arrabal and Roland Topor, he formed the 'Theatre of Panic' (1962) which staged happenings and caused general mayhem.

In 1968, Jodorowsky made his directorial debut with the film **Fando Y Lis**, which reflected the psychological dislocation and socio-political upheaval

The revered underground filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky once stated, 'I ask of cinema what most North Americans ask of psychedelic drugs.' In other words, he plans to blow your mind with his unique cinematic vision. Checking him out today, as a wild-haired, even-wilder-eyed old geezer, his own mind seems to have expanded beyond the boundaries of his cranium, but hey, one wouldn't have either wanted or expected this great hero of psychedelic cinema to have gone quietly into his twilight years.

Looking a bit like Albert Einstein on a bad hair day, Joda's back in town, and

the land of the living, to promote **Santa Sangre**, his last great movie "trip." Made in 1989, it lacks the intellectual charge of Joda's earlier movies but makes up for it in striking imagery.

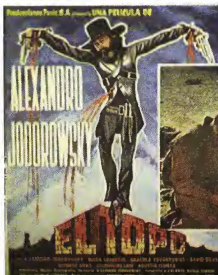
Alexandra's sons Aden and Axel star as Felix, a traumatised young man who grows up in a circus (like Jodorowsky himself) as part of a bizarre mime act with his twisted mother. She has no arms, so he provides them for the act, and eventually he is driven to murder by her evil influence.

Beautifully photographed, with inspired art direction, and a pounding effective music score, **Santa Sangre** is

EL TOPO

D'ALEXANDRO JODOROWSKY





it. I will live to be 120. My father is 98 and he's alive and well.'

The only thing that does give him a little cause for concern is the imminent end of the world. 'The apocalypse is now,' says Jodo, waving his arms about a little alarmingly. 'Americans know this, that the only hope is the flying saucers. Do you know how I see the world? Like a person who is dying. It's a worm who is dying to make a butterfly. We must not stop the worm from dying, we must help the worm to die to help the butterfly to be born. We will make a big, big enormous butterfly. You and I will be the first movements in the wings of the butterfly because we are speaking like this.'

Er, yes. Oh look... here come the men with the butterfly nets... •

enveloping Mexico. However, it was **El Topo** (1971) which catapulted Jodorowsky to cult status. Hailed by John Lennon as a masterpiece, **El Topo** was a psychedelic western that revealed Jodorowsky to be the cinematic heir to Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel. And faster on the draw than either.

His followup **The Holy Mountain** (1974) continued on uncompromising exploration of primal otavisms and deeply spiritual imagery. Hollywood beckoned. And then the hyperbolic weirdness erupted. There are many conflicting stories about Jodorowsky's ill-fated attempts to bring Frank Herbert's novel **Dune** (1965) to the screen, but suffice to say he wasn't really the man for the job!

Santa Sangre was more his style. Jodorowsky spent six years creating this personal, poetic vision of madness and murder, inspired by a chance meeting with a famous Mexican serial killer. 'He was a criminal but he forgot that he killed fifteen women, and he went to an asylum for ten years,' Jodo explains. 'Then he came out and he was a normal person when I met him.' Er, normal by whose standards?

Santa Sangre is his personal tribute to Tod Browning's **Freaks**. 'I must tell you I hate actors,' he says. 'One day soon we will not need to use them at all in films. All of the actors in **Freaks** were good, though. My favourite was the man who has no legs or arms. That was a good actor to me. That's one I remember very, very well. I like Tod Browning a lot. He's like a father to me. I think maybe I'm a reincarnation of Todd Browning. Who knows? Certainly not Jod, that's for sure.'

Elephants are another big influence, which is why there's a big elephant burial scene in **Santa Sangre**. 'I know the elephant very well,' says Jodo mysteriously. 'Listen... the elephant is the image of Christ. In the scene with the elephant coming down and the people running down were fighting for the meat.

I had no money to give them, so I allowed them to eat the meat. They fought over it.'

Er, so was eating the elephant in the film representative of eating Christ? 'Yes,' he nods vigorously, 'because every Catholic knows every time they take communion they take in the body of Christ in their mouth. Christ was the first vampire. He gave his blood to his disciples. In the last supper, they took the blood of Christ through wine. The Pope is the biggest vampire, he takes in the blood of Christ everyday. And he's a cannibal. They are vampires and cannibals.' Oh dear, he's off again.

In case you haven't twigged, Jod doesn't like religion much. 'Religion is killing the planet,' he says. 'The churches are taking the money, priests are molesting children. It's a disease in the world. I believe in mysticism...' He admits to being fascinated with violence, and there's plenty of it in **Santa Sangre**. 'I don't love violence in the way that you see it in American pictures,' he explains. 'I love it in a different way. When a child is born, it is violent. When a flower opens up, it's violent. Even when you die it's violent. Life is very strong. Myself, I'm not searching for an audience. Because even when you go to a picture and the moment is strong, the only thing you hear is the mouth of people eating popcorn. If you take out the popcorn from America, you take out the sound of the planet.'



So it's safe to say that Jodo won't be making any movies for Jerry Bruckheimer in the near future. 'When I make a picture I need to be free,' he says emphatically. 'The producers are very difficult - they want to produce a star. They want a big audience. But I'm doing

Filmmaking's a family business for Jodorowsky. He took star billing in El Topo (two) and The Holy Mountain, and featured his twin sons in Santa Sangre, a movie that throws up more than its fair share of bizarre, surrealist images inspired by Jod's circus background!

Don Edmonds is most famous for directing the notorious *Ilsa, She Wolf of The SS*. In the conclusion of an epic interview, Calum Waddell delves into Don's flirtations with the Hollywood mainstream, and plans for a new *Ilsa*!

WOLF AT THE DOOR



Julia Roberts and Meryl Streep don't work in these kinds of pictures (laughs) so your casting call is not too long. David had worked with her on something else – and he called her up and asked if she wanted to come in for a casting. There were maybe about 15 girls that were blonde and busty and didn't trip over cables, so we asked them in.

Now you got to understand, when you're paying fifty dollars a day and you're guaranteeing they're going to work an eighteen hour day, and you're going to damn near kill them, then their desire to be in your movie is not that great. Especially when you're going to cut the balls off guys and do a picture with whips and chains, which nobody had ever done before. It didn't provoke a lot of people to want to come in, but that day she walked in the door. She'd been in Dave's picture so she came over to see what was going on and the truth of it is she brought something to it. She brought a certain command, just through the door. She had big boobs and blonde hair and all this stuff, but there was also something very commanding about her and it worked – it really worked. And she was sensitive, I mean everybody was sensitive about doing the film, but she was a spiritual woman. She is a minister...

Ilsa was shot on the sets of *Hogan's Heroes*. Did anyone involved with *Hogan's Heroes* know what you were up to?

Good question, but I don't know. You know the studio was kind of shut down at that point in time and when we went on the back-lot, looking for locations to shoot the picture, we were prepared to shoot it anywhere that looked like the Army. So what happened was that we found it – and it was just sitting there, man. It had been sitting there for about four years. I mean, weeds were growing in it, and we went to the people and asked to use the set. What it was, was that *Hogan's Heroes* never used the exteriors – they never used any of the interiors, but we were so cheap we used the interiors too... and then we had to build a couple of sets so we rented a soundstage for about a couple of weeks. The dungeons and stuff, we had to build that... but that was it. Like it or don't like it – we had so little money that we were out there and the lunch truck would come up to do lunch for the extras and we would have to charge them. (Don speaks with disgust) what a cheap bunch of shits we were, man. "Yeah, that'll cost you a dollar twenty-five." "Hell we're only making nine bucks!" "OK, then we'll give you a discount of thirty five cents." Charging extras to eat – it was cruel. We were all working twenty-hour days.

How do you envisage the film if it had been blessed with a higher budget?

Well now, that would have been fantastic. Of course the film would have been different. The actors would have been better and the production values would have been greater – it would also have had much more scope. We could have slowed down and we could have had more film stock and equipment to accomplish what we knew we could do, but couldn't afford to do. We did the very best we could with the material and resources we had, we stretched out every inch of available help and we worked like dogs and finished on exact time – not another inch of film was ever shot to make the film. What I shot was what they used.

Why did you cast Dyanne Thorne in this 'exploitation film' when, in all due respect, she's not the most physically attractive of women and the role would seem to call for someone glamorous considering how much nudity is in the movie...

That I knew I was doing – I was making a exploitation picture. There was a girl named Phyllis Davis who we cast in the picture. A very different character, much sweeter – she had done some soft-core stuff, not much... she was a beautiful girl. But Phyllis was dark haired, and at the last moment, literally – we were all set up and ready to do it, she dropped out. We had this rush call for casting, "Blonde, big tits, can walk and chew gum at the same time and can maybe do a little dialogue," we'll work around the rest of it.

Was Dyanne bothered with being nude?

She was fine with it. I told her what I was going to do and what I wouldn't do. I would do that with anyone, who is going to work with me, before I roll the camera. I'm going to tell you what's going to happen and what's not going to happen and I make an agreement with that girl or guy and I don't break it. No, that would be dirty... I'm very good at this but I'm also very truthful. I'm going to be candid with you. I know that a lot of interviewers want to know my psychological implications and I'm telling you that I know there is now, I know that the film has had an impact – and it did have social implications and it did put countries against each other...

There's a story about the film playing in Belgium and Germany being upset...

Yeah, that's true, Belgium and Germany – I know they did that. From what I know if it Belgium put it on the border between them and Germany for a year and the German government told them to get it out of there and Belgium, in essence, told them to go fuck themselves. It never went to Germany, unless they're buying it on the Internet.

Did it make a lot of money right away?

Yeah, and who knew man? It should have been a videotape. You know, I didn't know it was going to even book. That wasn't my job, I was the director of the movie! It played in the Apollo Theatre in New York – it opened there. Now the Apollo was on 42nd Street before they cleaned up 42nd Street. This was when you had to kick the drunks and the junkies out of the way just to get in the door. You used to have a television monitor outside that would run a continual loop of this thing. In the newspaper there was no advertising. You know when you look at *The Times* you usually see that *Gone with the Wind* is playing at two and six and that's all it is – just this long list of films. Well we had *Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS* listed at twelve, two, four, six and eight. By the second week you couldn't get in there.

The Apollo Theatre was where guys went in to stroke their puns and sleep. You know – the drunks and the junkies are in that theatre puking on the floor. They added screenings and then they added an all-nighter so that you could now see *Ilsa* at the Apollo Theatre twenty-four hours a day. The third week, Vincent Canby, one of the great reviewers of our day – he was the main reviewer of *The New York Times*. That's *The New York Times*, you hear me? He goes down to 42nd Street, goes down to the Apollo Theatre and he sits through *Ilsa*. He came back out and wrote a two column review that ran in the *Sunday New York Times*.

He hated it! He thought it was the worst film of the decade – and the funniest! Then he went off all the social implications, which was the first time I ever had any idea that anybody was taking this film seriously. I have still got the review – I'm stunned, Vincent Canby, man, he reviews all the big films – what incentive could he have had to go down to 42nd Street and sit next to some guy stroking his dick? I couldn't believe this was happening. Then by the third week it figured in the top fifty grosses of pictures around the United States in *Variety*.

And then did it go around America?

Hey, just wherever it could get a booking. Some States would play it and some States wanted nothing to do with it. As far as I know it went to video and then it did all that. Now you got to know that for thirty years, after I made *Ilsa, The Harem Keeper*, I thought, "Don't you got to walk away from this or you ain't ever gonna have a career." Because I wanted to do other pictures...

Dyanne Thorne says *Ilsa* killed her career...

No, no – that's what she says. You ask her where her acting career was (laughs). No, I got along fine with Dyanne, I don't want to get into this, but it killed her acting career – well, yeah, and it was what until you had *Ilsa*? But yeah it hurt her and it also made her.

You received well thought: *Bare Knuckles* is commonly thought to be your best work as a director...

Yeah, I made *Bare Knuckles* after *Ilsa* but *Ilsa* still



did hurt me. When you go to directors, there's always this need to have this centre, "I will only direct"... but there's a lot of things in the world I like to do. Directing I love to do, but there's other stuff I like to do, some things that don't even involve movies at all. I like life. And, hell, I'll drift off for a couple of years. I mean, why not? I have spent my whole life in the movie business, I've made a living out of the movie business all these years – but there's a lot of things I like to do and I did them.

If *Ilsa* hurt the careers of those involved with it, why did you make a sequel – *Ilsa, Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheikhs*?

Well you know what they wanted to do – they wanted to make it lighter. They wanted to put a little more humour into it. And they asked me if I would make the next one and I said, "Yeah." I mean, I'm already painted with the black brush – so go ahead. I went and did the sequel and it played quite successfully. I don't know that it did the numbers of the first film – you'd have to take that up with the Canadians – but it did very well. But by that time, a year and a half later, Dyanne was established and I knew the ramifications of her. I knew what she would do.

They wanted to open the (first) picture in Rhode Island and this is where the religious right are – it's really strict. So some good rents the theatre in Providence, Rhode Island. He gets out, you know these Nazi convertibles – the old Mercedes Benz that Hitler used to ride around in – well they found one. He gets some chack that is

blonde and has got big tits and he puts up on the marquee "*Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS*, opening Wednesday." They get the girl in the car with a sign on the side that says, "Come see *Ilsa*" and the details of the theatre. They drive her right down the main drag of Providence, Rhode Island to sell this movie. The people stoned her!

The driver drives back to the theatre and then, like the villagers that are hunting Frankenstein, they're following them and throwing rocks (laughs). The poor girl and the driver run inside the theatre, the crowd runs in too – they tore down the marquee, tore up all the seats and tore down the screens (laughs). The picture has never played in Providence, Rhode Island. They weren't having it, man! That's a true story – you know the stories that go on about this shit are unreal...

What are your memories of directing the sequel?

Oh by that time I had Dean Cundy working for me and I had Michael Riva, I had a good group of people. So we just smoked some dope and went and made the damn thing.

It's not as explicit as *Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS* is it?

No it isn't, and I had to find some of the same people things to do – for example, I had to find something for Buck Flower, he played a beggar... It was just going over ground that I'd already been over. "Ah Dyanne, how you doing babe, it's nice to see you" – and so we just made the damn thing. And we made it in square, right wing, Glendale

California

Now Glendale is the most right-wing city around here. They don't like nothing – in fact, they won't even let people shoot in Glendale a lot of the time. If you come in with a picture and they read your script and don't like it then they won't let you shoot in Glendale. So we're looking around, now there's a scene – we needed to have this big fight at the end, but we couldn't find a place that looked Arabic. And we found a nursery. A fucking nursery, man!

Now we had to find a building that was like the Sharif's tower – now in Southern California, that's a little hard to do. So one of the guys says, "I know a place – it's in Glendale" and we all go "Sheesh!" "Well where is it?" "Glendale public library," I said, "You got to be kidding!" – so we go over and look at it, and there it is – it's perfect. The guy says, "Do we go and get a permit?" And I said, "Don't even think about it – we're not going to get a permit."

But we needed this place, so what happens in the picture is the Sharif comes down the stairs and meets the Henry Kissinger character who drives down in the limo and they shake hands and they go into what is supposed to be the Sharif's palace. Now we got to have this shot – got to have it. So on a Sunday morning, in square, dumb Glendale, I come down there with Richard Kennedy and this dufus as the Sharif and I pull up two jeeps with fifty calibre machine guns and I'm going to shoot this scene.

We're driving up, and all of a sudden the water sprinklers come on in this big lawn that's in front of the building. And I see this gardener, and this poor guy is just out there on a Sunday morning doing his thing, and I say – "Sir, didn't you get the word?" He goes, "What?" And I said, "We were supposed to shoot here this morning and you've got the water on. I demand you turn it off." He goes, "Oh I'm sorry" and he turns the water off. I say, "Now can you get out of the shot because you're bothering us." So he gets out of the shot – people aren't even up yet. I say, "shoot it" (laughs). In comes the limo, we do our thing and we get out of there by eight o'clock.

Ivana is your upcoming *Ilsa* film isn't it? Is that going to shock a whole new generation?

Ivana is going to top all brother, it's going to top it all. I just got it deal on it today. The company that I wanted to do it took it today, so we're going along with it. We'll start shooting next year.

Did you watch the other sequels – *Ilsa, The Tigress of Siberia* or *Ilsa, The Wicked Warden*?

No, I've never watched *The Tigress of Siberia* or *The Wicked Warden*. I know that must seem strange to you but I just never had any interest in looking at rip-offs of what I originally made. Maybe it is either ego or boredom that's kept me from sitting down and actually watching them but as to this date I haven't. If you insist then I might rent them and watch. At least I've got a fast forward button at my fingertips (laughs).

So has any movie ever offended the director of *Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS*?

I don't know that any movie has ever truly offended me. Many films have turned me off and

I've walked out of a ton of them. Mostly because I just thought they were bad, boring, or just not worth my time.

But filmmakers, myself included, must have the right to fail. Movie making is such a bitch of a thing to do that you are always walking the knife-edge every second while you're in production. It's all a high wire act, and whether you're making a low budget quickie or one hundred million-dollar epics – all directors face disaster the second they step onto a movie set – and I know this. When a film gets made it usually has so many conditions attached to it from money to weather to actor ego, acts of God, lost locations, broken equipment, and on and on. The old adage is that, "The directing of a movie is the answering of a million questions", and it's true. And sometimes they all seem to be coming at you at the same time. That's why I tend to temper my feelings for a film by the fact that I know what the director is going through. But as for being offended... I'm searching my mind and I can't think of a film that's my word.

What are your memories of doing *Bare Knuckles*?

A great time – I wanted to change pace. I wrote the script, it was called *Zacharie Kane* to begin with. And the script was way too long – it had too much stuff in it, so I cut it down. I had no money...

Even after doing the two *Ilsa* films?

No – what, you think I got to be a millionaire from doing *Ilsa*?

No, but having made two films that made money I would have thought you might have been entrusted with bigger budgeted films...

Nah, they hate you. I'm a total failure in that department. That was the day when if you wanted to make independent pictures then you just made independent pictures, you wanted to make television then you just made television. This was when Dennis was making *Easy Rider*, and everyone is off doing their own thing. No, they weren't busting down my doors. I wrote the script and by this time I'm a maverick, I wanted to be my own guy, make what I wanted to make. So I wrote the script and I had no money to make it with. I was working at other things to keep the rent paid, but I wanted to make that picture. It's about a modern day bounty hunter and I liked it. So I got the money from... basically I went and got my taxes done and my tax guy said, "I want to get into the movie business" and I said, "I got this script, let's do it." He says, "I got these investors..." So I ask how much he's got. "Well, there's five of them and they'll come in for five thousand dollars a piece." That's twenty-five grand. So I went to a company called Manson Distribution owned by a guy called Mike Oldham, and Mike says, "I'll give you a goods and services deal – I'll buy your cameras and new stock and all that kind of stuff" – so it's basically money. The equivalent of about another twenty-five grand so we got fifty grand. So we made the film.

***Bare Knuckles* looks good considering the small budget – maybe a testament to Dean Cundy's cinematography skills...**

It does look good, it really does. But it was another one of those real maverick things – we just went

and did it. I had the wonders of Dean Cundy, Mike Riva and Debra Hill.

Off the top of my head, was *Bare Knuckles* before or after the Charles Bronson film, *The Streetfighter*?

Before, I think. That's one of the first movies I'd ever seen that had karate in it. But I'm proud of that story. You know – I'm such a bull-shitter. We had no money, man – we had fifty grand to make that picture. I mean, come on – that was all in. I'm talking post production, everything. I'm making nothing – we're just trying to do the film. We ran out of money three times and we had to stop – we'd go down and get some more money to finish it... At the end of *Bare Knuckles* there was to be a car chase, one car – we didn't have a backup car, so we had to keep fixing it. That's why you have backup vehicles in movies, so you can keep moving, but we didn't have one. I think I paid about three hundred dollars for this piece of crap car that looked pretty good. I had a high fall, the end of the chase and the stuff on the top of the trains all left to do, and that's the end of the movie. Well I was out of money and I had to take the equipment back. This was on a Friday. I said to our little group, "I'm out of cash, I can't pay you. I have no money. I can't even buy you a balcony sandwich. I'm done."

So we bonded... Cundy, Riva and all those guys are there and I'm in tears. "I've borrowed out everything I can borrow," this is '74 and I'm just a young guy I don't even know what I'm doing with money. I said, "I've got these cameras 'til Monday which gives us Saturday and Sunday and then I have to take them back, and I got some raw stock and that is all I got. I need this footage, it's the final ten minutes of the movie – I've got to do it."

Now I'm not talking about two people talking. I'm meaning chases and throwing guys off buildings, I need stuntmen – but I'm done. We had the stunt guys and crew and everybody there and I said, "I tell you what – I'm asking you to give me these three days. In fact I'm begging you – you guys can talk among yourselves, but I'm going to be back down here at six in the morning and if I'm here alone then I love you and I really understand." And I walked off and went home and I had a bad night. But I got up in the morning and drove back down to the set and every fucking one of them was standing there... It said everything to me. That's why you make pictures. It was grand – the single greatest day of my life when I just saw them standing there and there wasn't any grand hurrah, it was just, "Oh fuck you, let's go to work." That's how they were.

You were a stuntman as well, weren't you?
You did stunts on a little known slasher movie called *Home Sweet Home*...

Well I did that and *Terror on Tour*, which I directed, we did those pictures in four or five days

I've not seen *Terror on Tour*...

You don't want to – you really don't want to. There's a guy named Jake Steinfield, a bodybuilding guy – he's a multimillionaire, never did anything before, he just goes "Uh-uh" (impersonates a gorilla). But we made *Home Sweet Home* in about four days. You want to make a feature picture in four days? Go ahead – that's twenty-five pages a day you're shooting. And



Dan Edwards directed the pilot episode of the popular (canceled) TV series *Sik Stalkings* (above), and was the first director attached to Quentin Tarantino's script for the scheduled (but *True Romance* failed) *Sally*. He lost out to Kevin Smith when it became a big budget Hollywood "property."

you're trying to figure out everything, and instead of having a shot over here and a shot over there, what if I just do this shot and pan? And then you want to cut and you can say your words... that was what it was like.

The same thing on the other one, *Terror on Tour*, they're terrible. Go make a good picture in a few days. I defy you. *Terror on Tour* - that was another dollar ninety-five film that we made in a few days. A guy named Sandy Colb hired me to do it at a movie theatre. These three actors that were actually in a rock group, and that had never acted in a picture before, had already been cast. I don't have had memories of it but it was just another quickie that came along and I directed.

Finally you made it to the mainstream though, you even directed the pilot to the television series *Sik Stalkings*, which ran for a while...

Ran for eight years. Well look, when you make a movie - understand the basic principle of making a film. It doesn't matter how many zeros are on the budget, all that really matters is that you have to know that regardless of whether it costs thirty thousand or thirty million, you got to pre-produce it, produce it and post-produce it. I learned how do this by doing these little films, because there isn't any help. You want your raw stock taking over to a lab? Well you don't call your guy and say, "Take this over," you get in the car and you drive to the lab. You wait until the guy comes out and gives you a bunch of numbers that you don't understand what the hell he's talking about, you go home and get a book to find out what it all means and you learn. That's where I learned it, I didn't go to UCLA.

How did you get involved with *True Romance*?

With *True Romance* I had worked with Greg Ricosonti for a long time and had done pictures with him over the years, he was my friend, he was head of sales at Producers Sales Organisation so I knew him from there and he started a company called August Entertainment. And I'd gone and troubleshooted pictures for him because I really know how to take a good picture. You know they call me 'The Doctor'? They do - they'll say, "Hey Doc we

want you to take this movie," which means you've got a movie that's already going and what you're getting back after the first week is that it's over budget and over schedule. That's because the producer's a moron and the director doesn't know what he's doing. So, "Will you get a plane and go and take this film?"

The first time I ever did it, it was like from hell - because you know getting off the plane, even before you land, they are going to hate your guts. You are the boss! You got a letter saying you're the boss and "I'm going to fire you if I don't want you." So there's these arrows coming at you because of who you are.

So when I got involved in that, that was some spot - and Gregory called me up one day and said, "I got a weird script here." I said, "Okay." "But we've got the money to make this thing and Bill Lustig is going to be the director, he owns the script, we're getting it made and we want you to produce it."

I said, "Cool." And he gave me a script and said, "This is really a strange film, I don't know - it's not like any other picture." I said, "Okay let's see it." I'm starting to read this thing and I'm going, "My God, who is this?" So I read it and I was just stunned - I called him and said, "Who is the writer?" He said, "I dunno, just some guy - his name is Quentin something." But he had never made a movie. He was just working down at a beach in a video store. And I said, "Let me tell you something Gregory, this is the writer for the nineties."

He says, "Get out of here!" I said, "I'm telling you man, this is a monster writer." "Really?" "Trust me, this guy has really got a voice." They gave us a budget of two and a half million, and we got little offices out in Radford Street, out in the Valley and we started casting. And Quentin was trying to cast and put together *Reservoir Dogs*, but he had still not made a film, nobody knew who he was. But Lustig finally dropped out, it got to be a bigger budget, I got kicked out of the thing. Tony Scott's manager got a bigger credit on the screen than I got. Single card credit on the screen as a producer of the movie - the guy came for lunch. I'm not mad, I have no animosity towards him (laughs). That's how that evolved. I went to Detroit, did the locations and all of that stuff.

So *Ilana* is your immediate future?

I wrote another script that I like a lot, but what I want to do at this time in my life is make pictures that have a market. And to be able to utilise now, if possible, the technology that I didn't have then. I mean, when we made these films - *Ilana* for instance, we had a camera that we'd go "fix it," and you'd slap stuff on it. It was so loud that we couldn't get sound. It was this old, old camera - but it was still a camera and it was a 35mm too. We did everything we could, except lay a dead dog over it - we just needed something to kill the soundtrack because the camera was so loud.

Did you cut anything from *Ilana*?

No I didn't cut the picture but there's more to it than what you see on screen. The deal I'm making now on *Ilana* - it's set in modern day, they asked me today if it is going to be R rated. I said, "Let me tell you something, just like with the other *Ilana* films, I'm not going to leave it on the sound stage. If you want to take it out - cut it out. But I'm going to shoot it. I did get a call from Joe Blasco, the original make up guy on the *Ilana* pictures. He told me that, even though he now runs his own makeup schools and has a huge product line, and is a very wealthy man, he wants to come back and do the new face effects and gore stuff in it. That was a great boost to me.

So the script for *Ilana* is written?

I've done the script, it's already written - and you shoot it because there's an audience for it, I know that from Chiller. They came up to me and said, "Oh man I can't wait to see that - you're not going to cheat us though, are you Don?" I say, "No, no I'm not." Now, what they edit out. I don't know - but that doesn't mean a thing because I'll just give you a director's cut. Oh yeah... I don't give a shit. Well don't need to make this film sell in the Bible belt, and all the old ladies who have tea in Iowa might not like it. If you tied them to the chair they wouldn't sit through it. Why do I give a shit about what they think? I'm making this film for a core audience that want to see blood, that want to see me ripping a hole in your chest with my fist and jerking your heart out - with the ensuing blood and arterial sprays! So that's what they want? Well guess what - that's what they're going to get!

**DON EDMONDS:
THE GREAT
EXPLOITERS**

Wolf at the DOOR!



Don Edmonds is most famous for directing the notorious *Ilsa, She Wolf Of The SS*. In the first part of an epic interview Calum Waddell delves into Don's amazing career making down and dirty exploitation movies...



Don Edmondson has had a long and varied career in exploitation cinema, and you can take that comment straight to the bank! From his time as an actor in such sixties drive-in features as *The Interns* (1962) and *Beach Ball* (1965) to his more infamous time as the director such notorious, and sleazy, shockers as *Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS* and its sequel *Ilsa, Tigress of Siberia*.

Of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg as far as Edmondson goes. For instance, he is credited as a producer on Tony Scott's modern classic *True Romance*, and also flirted with the mainstream via his work on the television series *Silk Stalkings* and the above average thriller *Midnight Crossing* (1988), which starred Kim Cattrall during her awkward pre-*Sex in the City*, but post-*Mannequin*, career. The following interview takes in all of this and more – but most surprising of all is how accommodating and good natured Edmondson is, a far cry from the sort of mind that you may expect to have dug up the *Ilsa* movies!

Fans of your work as a director may be surprised to learn that you started your career in film as an actor...

Oh yeah, I was an actor for a long time – I acted from the mid-fifties, and that's what I started as. Mostly on the stage, and then I came here (Los Angeles) in the mid-fifties and I got pretty successful as an actor. I did a lot of television, and some films, and then the evolution of it was that I just started writing a little bit, you know. Then I partnered with a guy and we decided we wanted to make pictures – and that was what it was – this was back in the mid-to-late sixties. But, yeah, I had a very successful career as an actor. I was never the leading man, I was always the "buddy" – you know – the guy who was used for comic relief... that kind of guy.

Do any of these early roles stand out for you?

Well nothing so spectacular that I want to go, "Oh yeah, I remember that," you know, but I acted a lot. I was always around in series – mostly television. I was in pictures like *Gidget Goes Hawaiian*, *The Interns*, *Beach Ball* and *Wild, Wild Winter* – the beach films were a lot of fun. Back then the beach films were playing to huge teen audiences...

Did you perhaps take any of this into your directing career – where, as with beach films in their day, you made exploitation movies for a young, thrill-seeking audience?

Yeah, but I didn't have money to make pictures with. You know – if you don't have money to put in a movie then you better make it for an audience. And in the sixties the T and A business was coming to be, although it wasn't all that big at that time. You could make these films cheap and you could make them quick and I didn't have much money to make pictures with, so you made what you could make. I think a lot of times people get the illusion that we have this great



DON EDMONDS: THE GREAT EXPLOITERS

Directing is something that many people want to do, and actually think they can do, but then when you try it you find you're really trying to do brain surgery and you haven't graduated from High School yet!

choice of stuff to do. "Oh I won't do that if I can hold out for *Gone with the Wind*." It's a joke! You make what you can make! This is the whole idea - you go out there, you get a bunch of guys, and if you want to make a picture then there's always some guy who puts up the money and says, "I want my money back." So you make something that is going to get him his money back...

I see from your Internet Movie Database profile that you have recently returned to acting with a role in a film called *Killer Drag Queens on Dope* - what's this about?

Oh that one! Yes I got hired to play a part in it, I played "Uncle A" the mob boss. Actually it's a very funny idea and not a bad script - the original concept could have been funny and hip, but the problem was that the writer had to be the director, and since he was also the financier that's just how it went. That's sometimes alright, and sometimes, like this time, it can turn into a cluster-fuck. The guy hadn't a clue about how to direct a film, so what was originally a good idea has, so far as I know, become something un-releasable. Film laboratories are full of those kinds of flicks - it's just an amateur making an amateur-looking DVD film and it's really a shame. The guy had the idea of what he wanted and he just could not get it.

Directing is something that many people want to do, and actually think they can do, but then when you try it you find you're really trying to do brain surgery and you haven't graduated from High School yet! The problem is that his ideas totally sucked - everyone on the film told him to give the directing chore to a pro but he wouldn't listen and so he got what he now has. It's an embarrassment, and I'm sure he'll never get his money back. I hate when that happens but sometimes it does - when a guy lets his ego overload his ass, and this is one of those times... But I'm terrific in it (laughs).

You produced *Tender Loving Care*, which was only your third film, and you've produced a lot more than you've directed during your career - was it ever your intention to make a name for yourself a producer rather than as a director?

Well (pauses) I'd written a few scripts and in that day Roger Corman was making pictures called *Night Nurse*, *Night School Nurse*, *Candy Striped Nurse* and whatever - he's making this nurse genre, so I wrote this thing about nurses called *Tender Loving Care*. I wrote it cheap so I could make it on a few sets, I didn't need to have much money and I didn't need stars in it - just put the tits and ass in it and that's all. We made that film for maybe thirty grand, and I didn't even have the thirty grand. I'd written the script but I didn't have any money and I met this woman. She called me up and said (Japanese accent): "My name is Chako Van Leeuwen" and I said, "Oh well that's good," and I'm talking to these guys who are doing other films and bigger films and all this bullshit. She says, "I want to meet you at a restaurant" -



and I go into this little drive-in restaurant and she's sitting there at the counter. This little Japanese woman and she always bent over to speak to you and never talked out loud.

I said, "What do you want?" and she said, "I want to make a picture." So I say, "Well good, you want to make a picture." Now I'm speaking to the William Morris office and this and that and I have no time for this stuff. But the bottom line is that all the deals we thought we had - forget about it - she made the movie. She put up the money through a film company based in Japan - and it was a trip man, it was really a trip.

We had this guy, Mr Tamagochi. Now I don't do bowing very good (laughs), I got an "F" at

bowing when I was at school. We go to this little office on a studio lot, and she says, "Mr Tamagochi is coming," and I just said, "Okay, cool." So I come in to this office and she has got a tea service set out. So here's this guy with a little string tie and a little grey suit and he doesn't speak a lick of English - now I'm trying to be nice. I say, "How are you doing Mr Tamagochi?" and we have this little tea ceremony.

Now I don't know what the hell is going on! She says, "Mr Tamagochi has a present for you" and I think "Oh good" - then he makes this great overture and he pulls out this Seiko watch. And he makes this grand presentation of this Seiko watch - and I do a little bowing and

thank him very much... but the watch never moved! Ever! Never ticked once. I tried banging it, kicking it, throwing it against the wall and nothing – that watch never moved.

She says, "Mr Tamagochi was a kamikaze pilot", I said, "He was a kamikaze pilot? Didn't they all die?" – and she said "Very, very big story." Of course, I say – "Right, well lay the story on me!" She says, "Oh well it was the last days of the war and Mr Tamagochi got a call that said 'go down to where the aeroplanes are.' He got in the plane, he got up in the plane, he see the American boats and then he dive – and he went and dived into the boats but he smashed straight through and got thrown out into the water and lived" (laughs). He was like the Vice President of Production at this Company.

Have your first two films – Southern Double Cross and Wild Honey been released on DVD yet?

Wild Honey is out here in America now, I have a DVD copy – the guys from Something Weird Video gave it to me. It was the first film I ever directed. *Wild Honey* was the first film I ever made. It was supposed to be a quickie – a soft "X" film and we made it in a week or so for about twenty-five thousand dollars. It got released in the Pussycat theatres that were big at the time and it did very well actually. That was around the time of *The Stewardess's* and that kind of film. I think we made it in 1969 or 1970, I can't quite remember the year but it was sometime around there.

It was a great experience since I didn't have a fucking clue as to how a movie was made, and so we were just a few people stumbling around trying to figure it out on the run. I love how it came out though, and I'm actually very proud of the film – it succeeded in spite of me. We shot it on roll ends and a huge old 35mm camera that broke down just about hourly, it's a true spit and bailing wire film as the say in the trade. We couldn't even afford lunch, let alone get anywhere close to the right equipment. We used what we had and stole the rest! It was a great experience that I wouldn't trade for anything.

The film was shot by a guy named David Ming Le Low who's gone on to be a world class architect. The sound was done by a young guy out of UCLA named Bill Kaplen, who has since gone on to get nominated for a few Academy Awards for Production Sound – he's a great guy. I found the lead girl, Donna Young, in a hippie pad in Venice. All she'd ever done before were a few sex loops and she was terrific – John Holmes is even in our movie, although he seemed to get cut out of some versions of the picture. He's one of the extras who is in the huge gold dildo scene at the end of the film. All in all it was fantastic to make it, it was a fucking PHD in movie making because I made every mistake in the book and learned from it.

But my next film, *Southern Double Cross*, is a piece of shit that I made in New Mexico in the mid-seventies. I was a work for hire from the writer and producer that seemed to feel that they'd written, and were making, *Gone with the*



Wind. They were total morons that didn't have a clue, but they did have the money so they kept jumping in and telling me how I was going to make it. Every time we'd come up with something funny that was off the wall a little from their script, they'd stop me and make me do it the way they wanted instead. It was a couple of hundred thousand dollars to make and I don't know if it ever saw the light of day – I mean, I hope not! I did have Dean Cundy with me though, and Debra Hill and Michael Riva – so we got drunk and had a few laughs at least. Let's leave this one alone, as it probably sits in

a dark vault somewhere, with the negative hopefully rotting away (laughs).

Were you influenced by any of the other exploitation directors that were around at the time? Russ Meyer might be the most famous example...

No. That's the answer to that. Russ Meyer was... well he was doing his thing, I had influences, but I came out of German theatre and I came out of Columbia Studios and Universal Pictures to make these little low budget things. And I had a lot of professional-



Don Edmonds signs a poster of his at a recent fan convention. Above and right: His role to say that well-reviewed Los Angeles shogun Dwayne Hickman was a lot better looking than the real life that

ism. You know, I think this is what I've always brought to the game. And I brought it into this low budget field and a lot of low budget films are just a bunch of guys that are like Mickey Rooney talking to Judy Garland and then they say, "Let's go out in the barn and do a show." They don't have any sense and they don't have organisation – just no sense of how a film goes together. They don't even have any money so it's just a bunch of kids out doing their thing, you know?

I always came from that other background, so I brought that to the work that I was doing, and I knew how to make a movie, I'd made a lot of them. I'd just been at the other side of the camera. You bring what you have to the job that you do – at least this is how I do it. And I was always able to get with one or two good people I would find and over the years I've been very fortunate to hook with people who are just beginning their careers – and they go on to wonderful careers. You know, Dean Cundy was with me and Michael Riva, Debra Hill – people who have gone on to monster careers with Oscar nominations. Serious stuff, but when we were together they were just out of UCLA. Dean Cundy – who is a terrific guy – he did *Axolotl 13*, the *Back to the Future* movies...



JOE EDWARDS, DANIEL J. TRAMER, KIM CATTALL, JOHN LUNDHOLM and NED BEATTY



IN A STORM OF
DESIRE, SUSPICION AND MURDER,
FOUR PEOPLE ARE ABOUT TO BE SWEEP AWAY.
**MIDNIGHT
CROSSING**
PARUSAN

Where he really broke out was with *Halloween*...

Yeah he did, but Debra Hill, who started with me, was the one who produced *Halloween*. She was with me on *Southern Double Cross* and *Bare Knuckles*. If you look at the crew on *Bare Knuckles* and the crew on *Halloween*, except for maybe the craft service guy, it's the same crew. She just took my crew and went over and made *Halloween* with John Carpenter. And I had assembled these guys over two or three pictures and I think that's something you do in the movie business, you work with somebody and they're either good or they're not good. You know next time if you don't want to use them or if you feel "Yeah I'd go down the barrel of a cannon with this guy or this girl". That's how I formed my group and Debra took them all.

For someone whose name is synonymous with exploitation you spent some time in your career producing mainstream films – of course there was *True Romance* but also *Midnight Crossing*...

Well I was more than a production manager on *Midnight Crossing* but that film came from a company called Vestron. And it had a star cast, Faye Dunaway, Ned Beatty, Kim Cattrall... I

got a call from Vestron, and for years I had been with a company called Producer's Sales Organisation. We were a terrific company, I was the Vice President of Production at the company level but I worked on all the films that we were doing there as the executive for that company... and that's the job I had for about five years. A great job, I loved it – it was the only time in my life that I was a suit.

You're most famous for *Isa, She Wolf of the SS* – do you dislike being associated with the film?

No I don't...

The reason I ask is because some of the cast, and the producer David Friedman, went under a pseudonym...

Oh he never put his name on it. I never denied it though.

So you were always happy to be recognised as the film's director?

Yeah, you know, when you make a movie and you're starting out... there was a picture called *Love Camp 7* and that was a picture they did with Bob Cresse. That went to Canada and it did very well up there, so they wanted to make a picture of their own like that and so they wrote this script, and they came down and they got a hold of Dave Friedman. Dave recommended five or six different directors that they could interview. They came down and interviewed all the directors and picked me. And I was just a guy out there in the street, trying to make the rent – literally trying to make the rent! And, it was thrilling – someone wanted me to direct a picture? Well, sure! "What's the picture about?" "I don't know, do you care?" "No". "Are you paying?" "Yes". "Well then, let's go – let's do it!"

But when people ask, "What was your motivation?" Well because I wanted to keep the lights on in my house (laughs). Come on! It was the early seventies – and I'm just a guy around Hollywood trying to make it. And you want me to direct your movie? I'd love to. I got to tell you, at that point in time when that thing came out – now I'm being honest with you, put it in your story, I don't care – I was flat broke, man. Holes in my shoes. You wanted me to direct a picture, at that time, about a dog pissing on a



flat rock with different camera angles I'd have done it – what, are you kidding? It makes no difference to me. If they pay money then I'd go, "Yeah let's do it!"

How did you react to the script?

It was terrible. I told the guy, I said – "This is the worst piece of shit I've ever read." He says, "I got a lot of money to make it though" and I said, "Well maybe I can find the socially redeeming value in it." What a whore, but fuck it, I don't care.

Did you know the reasoning behind the person who wrote the script? Was it just to shock and offend? I mean, it's a bit sinister to make an exploitation film in a concentration camp...

To make money I guess, just to make a few bucks. We kicked the shit out the Nazis, so what do we care? Just get some fool down in Hollywood – he'll direct it, some fool will do it (laughs).

You've got the opening scroll at the beginning of *Ilsa* telling viewers that what is being shown is so that we'll never forget the horrors of the Holocaust – was this your idea? It reads as if someone on the film got a guilt trip at some point...

(Don gestures the "wanker" sign with his hand, and laughs)

So that's not one of your ideas?

No. I told them to take it off. You see that thing come up on the screen with the drum rolls and that German thing, and you just go, "What a bunch of shit," and you cut to this guy getting his balls cut off – I mean, come on! Get real.

Were you ever concerned that a person who survived the Holocaust might see the film and be personally offended?
I know you'd like me to say yes, to say that I have all this moral conscience about it and "Oh

yes there's this deep psychological thing of why I did it," because it makes really good copy. But the fact of it is – first of all the word "Jew" is never in that picture. And the guy who hired me, John Denning, he said to me, "I really want to see this on the screen" – I said, "You're going to see it babe, oh you're going to see it". He said "I want you to put the cameras right in it" and I said, "Don't worry about that, I'll put the camera right where it's supposed to be." And that was my mandate.

Look, we're talking, with *Ilsa*, about a film that over thirty or so years has become this social phenomenon. But it didn't start out this way. Okay? I got a kid called Wesley Rose – "You're going to shoot it", I got this guy over here – "You're gonna be the grip" and so on. "What are you paying?" "I'm paying a dollar twenty five an hour and no lunch break."

"Okay, let's go."
A bunch of people came in – why? Because we were all at the beginnings of our career and we all wanted to work, and that's why we did it. We did what was on the page, I didn't write it but I directed it. You said you wanted to look at it on the screen? Then I'm going to show it to you. That's it, and when you look at it all deep and meaningful... I had a woman, I should have brought this for you, from Claremont College and she has taken and written a Doctorate on *Ilsa*, *She Wolf of the SS*! A very serious paper on the social implications of *Ilsa*, *She Wolf of the SS*! She mailed it to me about two weeks ago and I'm reading this thing and thinking, "My God, who did this?"

Now I know you'd like me to say, "Yes I had that on my mind the whole time and I knew it was going to be a film with social implications and the public was going to damn it! I did it with great gusto because I knew the world was going to come apart if they saw my movie." But I'd be lying to you, man! It didn't happen that way, and if you interview Dyanne Thorne and she tells you it did – well it didn't. If you interview Dave Friedman – it didn't. It was a nine day quickie for fifty grand and maybe

another fifty grand in the post-production of it. Nine days! Now you want me, at nine days, making that size of movie with a crew of nine people to be thinking about social implications? I'm just thinking, "Can we finish this with some raw stock left? Put it over here – shoot it. Cut! Can you see it?" "Yes." "Can you hear it?" "Yes". "Print it". Social implications – really...

So you're making this movie about a female of the SS who cuts off men's balls if they don't sexually satisfy her and you're not, for even one minute, thinking, "This is insane"?

No, don't get me wrong – I'm a very smart guy, I knew what I was making. I would make some shot, look at it and shout, "Cut." Then I'd say, "Damn Don, what did you just make man?" Now you got to remember that this is not 2006, this is 1972... I'm looking at the maggots coming out of her arm and I'm going, "Cut, yeah print it" and then thinking, "What did you just

make there?" But yeah, I knew about women's liberation and all the aspects of that which, over the last thirty years have become very prominent. You know – go back and do your history and your homework and you see that women were just beginning to burn their bras when we made *Ilsa*! But I knew that I wanted a strong woman because she had to lead the movie. You know, a real ball buster so I wasn't going to have a whim, I'd give her a couple of moments where she gets a little soft, and shows there's another element to her but the whole character of *Ilsa* is about strength.

Do you know the reason why David Friedman went under a pseudonym? Was it because he was Jewish?

You know, I think you'd have to ask David why, and all of the ramifications. He had money problems with one of the guys... he got turned off. Yes, he's Jewish – but as to what the real deep meaning is that he took his name off it, I really don't know. He's a friend of mine, I still meet with him all the time, I was at the Chiller Festival with him last year, but I don't ask him all that stuff. Because whatever the deep reason for him to take his name off it – that's his business, and it should be his dance, I wouldn't want to answer to that question for him because I really don't know.



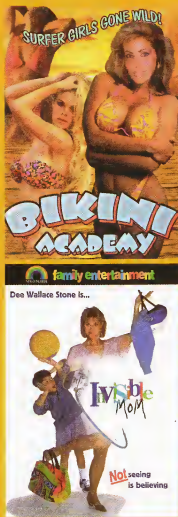
This epic interview concludes next month with Don's behind-the-scenes take on Quentin Tarantino and his involvement in *True Romance*!



RAY OF THE DEAD!

part 2

He's given the world such memorable schlock epics as *Bad Girls From Mars* and *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*, but is the prolific Fred Olen Ray a talent to be celebrated rather than scorned? Walter Machen investigates...



The 1990s saw the rise and rise of the "erotic thriller" genre and Ray helped to kick-start this trend with his 1991 scorching *Inner Sanctum*. Ray was back working as a director-for-hire for other companies and *Inner Sanctum* made a small fortune in video sales for uncredited executive producer (and former actor) Mark Daman and his company MDP Worldwide. Pleased to escape the limiting horror/action film director tag, Ray rapidly made the inevitable sequel *Inner Sanctum 2* (1993 - which was released in the UK in the wake of Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, 1994 as *Natural Cold Killer*) and another erotic thriller, *Passessed By The Night* (1993) which contained an appearance by 40s film star Turhan Bey as well as movelously threatening action vet Henry Silva.

A more conventional murder mystery was *Mind Twister* (1992) which contained one of the last performances by one-time Kojak actor Telly Savalas as well as the first true exploitation superstar; Shof's very own Richard Roundtree. Made for Luigi Cingolani's Smart Egg Pictures (one of the original financiers of *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, 1984 and *Critters*, 1986), the film hasn't received the distribution it deserves. On the other hand *Little Devils* (UK video title: *Witch Academy*) is easier to find and stars Robert Vaughn (from the great 60s TV spy series *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*) and Priscilla Barnes. It's about a college student who is humiliated

by a group of girls for wanting to join their sorority. The Devil himself (Vaughn) comes to her aid...

In a lighter vein Ray teamed up with the aforementioned Jim Wynorski (whose career is a lot like Ray's) to make *Hollywood Hat Tub Scream Queen Party*. Shot very rapidly on video, this is really just an excuse to show several half-naked "scream queens" relaxing in a jacuzzi watching scenes from their films. The directors decided to give themselves pseudonyms for this one, so it must be bad!

Wynorski and Ray also collaborated on *Dinosaur Island* which had everything you would expect from a film with that title: stop-motion and animatronic dinosaurs, stranded travellers and lots of naked women. You can't blame Ray for wanting to make a dinosaur movie and he even gives a credit to the one in his film - "Rex The Wonder Comosaur." It was made for New Horizons, a company owned by Ray's greatest inspiration as a film-maker - Roger Corman.

Ray hadn't stopped financing films through his own American-Independent Productions and produced two movies circa 1993 in Orlando, Florida for new director Steve Lattshaw: *Dark Universe* and *Biohazard: The Alien Farce* (mainly a sequel to Ray's own *Biohazard*). *Dark Universe* is notable for appearances from Martin Sheen's actor/brother Joe Estevez and legendary Florida director William Greffe (who directed *Death Curse of Tartu* and the great shark scenes for the James Bond movie *Live and Let Die*), and both films were released directly to video in the United States.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

It was back to Corman and New Horizons for *Attack of the 60 Foot Centrefold* (1995) and soon afterwards came *Bikini Drive-In*, in which a beautiful co-ed inherits her grandfather's drive-in cinema and is forced to save it from unscrupulous property developers. The cast is amazing and contains legendary porn producer David F. Friedman (who was responsible for

Herschell Gordon Lewis' most famous films), *Aftermath* director Steve Borkett, Richard Gabai (who directed *Assault of the Party Nerds*) and David L. Hewitt, who made 1964's seriously whooped-out science-fiction version of L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* entitled *The Wizard of Mars*.

Then there was producer/director Anthony Cordozo who gave the world *Bigfoot* (1969) and *Smakey and the Hotwire Gang* (1980), director Jim Wynorski, two of the genre's greatest journalists in Forrest J. Ackerman and Donald F. Glut, Ray himself and a fun cameo from former muscleman and action star Gordon Mitchell - who pays homage to his many years as a star of Italian peplums by appearing as Goliath in a film-within-a-film sequence. How many of these personalities your average video viewer is going to notice is anybody's guess but clearly Ray loved working with - and presumably having long nostalgic chats with - these veteran actors. It seems that Ray is finally able to make films in any genre he wants and with cable television a voracious consumer of movies just as video was a decade earlier, the mid-to-late-90s find him phenomenally busy: you can watch out for the science-fiction/action flicks *Droid Gunner* aka *Cyber-Zane* (released in the UK on video as *Phoenix II*) and *Star Hunter* (both 1995), or straight action movies like *Hybrid* (1995), *Fugitive Rage* (UK title *Caged Fear*), *Maximum Security*, *Inferno* (shot in India) and *Rapid Assault* (all 1996), *The Shooter*, *Counter Measures* (both 1997) and *Fugitive Mind* (1998) or if erotica/erotic thrillers are more your thing there is *Masseuse*, *Over the Wire*, *Illicit Dreams 2*, *Friend of the Family 2* (all 1995) and *Nightshade*, *Bikini Haedwand* and *Masseuse 2* (all 1996). If you have kids perhaps you can keep them quiet with *Invisible Mom* (1995), *Invisible Dad* or *Little Miss Magic* (both 1996). Also available on UK video are the Ray classics, *Black Stocking Diary*, *Bikini Cowgirls* and *American Masseuse*.

EVIL SPAWN

SPECIAL WIDE SCREEN EDITION

TONIGHT...SHE WILL LOVE AGAIN
-AND KILL AGAIN



If you have come across (a-hem) some of the erotic stuff and don't recall seeing Ray's name, that's because he is using several pseudonyms for this work: in particular "Nicholas Medina", "Roger Collins", "Peter Daniels" and "Noble Henri". Oh yes and he's signing some of the action films as "Sherman Scott".



STING IN THE TAIL

While many critics turn up their noses at Fred Olen Ray and his work, I celebrate the fact that he gets out there and makes a lot of films - and damn it, they're fun! He also releases plenty of them on his Retromedia label, which has unearthed such gems as *Queen Kong* and *War of The Robots*, often with Drive-In style intros by Fred and his current squeeze, Miss Kim.

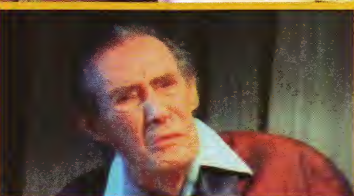
Ray has survived in a notoriously fickle industry by adapting to changing circumstances and he must have - as they say - big cajones. To illustrate this I'll do so by mentioning a project of Ray's that began life as something called *Wasp*. This was some footage Ray shot in the summer of 1986, intended as a re-make of Roger Carmon's 1959 grade Z classic *The Wasp Woman*. Deciding he had better things to do with his time, Ray turned the footage over to director Kenneth J. Hall, who had written some scripts and worked special effects on features such as *Spacehunter* (1983) and *Critters* (1986).

Ray allowed Hall to use some of the garage of John Carradine and Down with him he had from his abortive *Frankenstein's Brain* project and Hall shot for a further seven days in September 1986.

Actress Bobbie Bresee appeared as a fading, B-movie star who takes a youth serum, unaware that it will turn her into a giant insect. At this point the film was called *Alive by Night*, but it gained yet another title, *Deadly Sting*, before being released by Comp Video in the United States as *Evil Spawn*. Bresee's husband Frank intended the film as a starring vehicle for his wife and had put some money into the project. Displeased with the film that emerged, the Bresees successfully sued Ray for the foreign rights to the film. They re-cut the film, added new music and a new title sequence and released the film in the UK as *Metamorphosis*.

This should have been the end of the saga but in late 1989 Ray regained the US rights from Comp Video and subsequently had friend and collaborator Ted Newsam shoot substantial new scenes for the film in mid-1990. A private eye plot was introduced and scenes re-teaming old action buddies Richard Harrison and Gordon Mitchell were completed. Ray excised much of Bresee's material and the film found new life on US cable as *The Alien Within*.

So whether you like his movies or not, you've got to admit that as far as recycling goes, Fred is one ecologically right-on guy! ■



Above: Veteran horror star John Carradine has appeared in countless movies for Fred - and even got paid for them as well!



Christopher Lee as Sess Heimer's evil creation in Jess Franco's *Blood Of Fu Manchu*.

FRANCO

SPEAKING

Bondage, breasts, bloodshed... and a zoom lens technique that's like a lunatic playing the trombone! For more than four decades, Jess

Franco has reigned supreme as the undisputed king of Euroschlock sex 'n' horror. Love him or hate him, you've still got to admit he's a total original! We interview Jess about his amazing 170-movie career!



T

hough Spanish-born filmmaker Jess Franco has been credited with directing more than 170 feature-length films over the past 45 years - under no less than 40 different aliases (which include Clifford Brown, John O'Hara, Manfred Gregor and even Betty Carter) - there are many cinemaniacs who probably aren't all that familiar with this mad king of exploitation cinema.

Franco's flicks don't pop up on cable frequently and aren't exhibited at the local multiplex. A glance at the cult shelf at a more eclectic DVD retailer is probably the best way to gain an audience with the work of this sinister seior.

The maverick filmmaker's mammoth output in the thriller, erotica and horror genres includes such recent Stateside releases as *Incubus* (2002), *Helter Skelter* (2000), *Blind Target* (2000), *Lust for Frankenstein* (1998), *Mari-Cookie and the Killer Tarantula* (1999) and *Tender Flesh* (1996), which feature such video-friendly lovelies as Amber Newman, Linnea Quigley, Monique Parent and the amazing Lina Romay, who has been Franco's significant other for the past three decades.

These five titles, like the rest of his extensive CV, are the inimitable work of a filmmaker who, quite simply, does whatever he wants and doesn't censor his vision, the yield being a collection of low-budget works that are at once violent, sexy and often disturbing.

The biggest DVD champions of Franco's work are Anchor Bay UK and Blue Underground. The former have even given us *The Jess Franco Collection*, a sampler of which will be adorning our very next issue as a freebie DVD cover mount. Meanwhile, let's catch up with what the man himself has to say about a whole lifetime of exploitation flicks...

Your work and its subject matter is often considered controversial, racist and over-the-top - genre films with a distinctive bite, if you will. How did you come to create these inimitable pieces?

I have always been a fan of cinema and when I was growing up in Spain, we could only see films that were heavily cut and censored and I always wanted to make films, and to make films with full flavour. I enjoy telling stories in my way and I always hope that's what my fans will like.

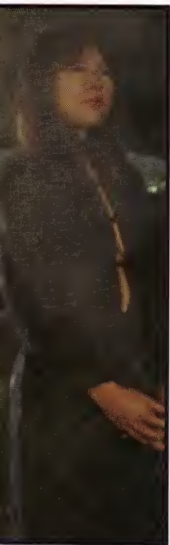
You've been unofficially credited with directing at least 170 films under a slew of assumed names. Why so many different names?

Sometimes, for official reasons. We used to have to fill quotas when making films in certain countries. So a German film, for example, needed to have a German director. So, Jesus Franco would become Jess Frank. Other times, I like to give homage to people who are my heroes in film and music, so I'll use a name to give homage to them.

Let's just delve into some of your releases that are out on DVD. One of the most popular is *A Virgin Among The Living Dead*, which can be bought from xplottedcinema.com. Your lead actress there was Christina Von Blanc. Was she in any of your other films?

Yes. She was in 3 or 4 films of the same period. She played small parts under the name of Christina Betner, which is her real name. After *A Virgin*, she made a quite nice career in Germany.

This film is filled with numerous zoom shots. What are you trying to convey with this particular camera movement?





In my films many zooms see a matter of feelings. Don't forget I'm a jazz player. I felt so, that's all.

When *A Virgin Among The Living Dead* was originally released in English-speaking countries it was badly dubbed, cut to pieces and shots were inserted that were done by Jean Rollin. Are you familiar with this butchered version of your work?

I know this version and I get mad when I remember this insane work of stupid butchers.

Your version of this film has a nice lyrical quality to it. Christina manages to keep her virginity intact throughout the course of the film, regardless of temptation. Yet, she is still victim to what must be a family curse. The film is perfect the way it stands so, does it make you angry when your films are changed for various film markets?

Unfortunately, directors are victims of all those bastards. From Von Stroinhauer to John Ford.

Who are your favourite actors to work with and why?

I never had the chance to work with my favourite actors such as Peter Lorre, Ralph Richardson and Jack Lemmon. From the actors I directed, my favourites are Howard Vernon, Klaus Kinski, Soledad Miranda, Lina Romay, and Mercedes McCambridge. Why? Because they were clever and sensitive.

If you could make a movie about any subject and money was no object, what would it be about?

Medea, a version of *Seneca* written at the beginning of our era, James Joyce's *Oliver*, Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, Garcia Marquez' *Hundred Years Of Solitude* and DeSade's *Juletette*.

How have you gone about financing your films over recent years? Sometimes you appear to be a director-for-hire.

No, not at all. There are always times when a director must make a film he does not like to make. But I'm lucky in these years to have a strong tie with my American producers who accept my projects and then arrange for the financing. If someone wants to hire me to make a film it must be a film that I like. Over the past few years, I've been asked to make about 4 or 5 films that I have not liked. So I haven't done them.

Many of your movies were produced by the notorious Harry Alan Towers. Tell us about your working relationship...

Harry's problem, the whole time that I worked with him, was never that he would come and prevent me from making the movies like I wanted them. He was great in that respect. Harry's problem was that he always had money problems. He doesn't like the actual shooting, and he told me that the very first time. He said, "Listen, I will not be here all the time, because I hate shoots. I find them very boring. You are there making them, so you don't have time to get bored, but for those on the outside..." Indeed, he was rarely on set and if he was there, he didn't open his mouth. He was very nice. We prepared the movies together



Christopher Lee was a frequent collaborator with Franco, as was the infamous producer Harry Alan Towers (above right). Both men contribute on-camera interviews in *Blue Underground's* Franco box set.

and discussed every detail, but once that was done and the shooting had started, only the director could open his mouth. When the editing would begin, he still wouldn't complain. The people around Harry might complain or those on the production could give you a hard time, but Harry himself would never complain. I never had a single argument or heated discussion with him. On the contrary, he would arrive and be very nice, he would tell us his stories and jokes. He was sensational. In that respect, I must say that I would not have been able to make all the movies I made if Harry had not been there for me.

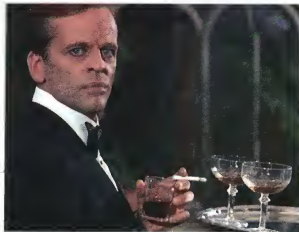
I think Harry is a very good screenwriter. He is a very knowledgeable man, by the way. I don't know if you know this, but he has an extensive literary background. He is capable of reciting not only Shakespeare but also Bernard Shaw and a number of British writers. He can write with incredible ease. That may be his problem, that it is too easy for him. He travels from Ottawa to Cape Town and during the flight, he writes a script. And it's well written. He knows the business, and he never - or rarely ever - tried to make movies that were too literary. He always wanted to make commercial films. Sometimes the problem was that his dialogue was a little too British. Personally I thought it was fine, and the proof of that is that when we shot with first-class actors such as Mercedes McCambridge, in *99 Women*, she recited Harry's exact text. She was very happy with his writing. What I love is that it's not too 'American'; it's a very intelligent and subtle dialogue. I think Harry is an excellent screenwriter.

Another of your regular female stars was Maria Rohm, who contributes an audio-only interview to the new *Blue Underground* disc of *Venus In Furs*. Tell us about her...

I met Maria while shooting the first movie I did with Harry, *Blood Of Fu Manchu*. I think she had arrived on the first day of shooting, or a couple of days before, something like that. I knew that she was Harry's lover. I obviously didn't do the casting for that movie, because everything had been done before I arrived. Maria was very kind, very young at the time, extremely beautiful and charming. I felt she was very good for the part. At first, the crew thought she was just the producer's girlfriend, but not at all. She was a very serious and meticulous young lady in her work. Plus, she helped Harry a great deal as his collaborator. She was a completely positive figure for Harry as much as for the rest during these movies, for me and for everyone. I was very happy with Maria's work, especially when we did *Venus In Furs* (1969). That was a complex character, very difficult and contradictory, and she assimilated and understood it perfectly. She is like that in her life.

When you were making films in the 60s and early 70s you were in competition with Hammer Films. Were you ever encouraged to make Hammer-type movies?

No, I never imitated Hammer and was never asked to. I think Hammer was very good for cinema at that time because the horror and fantasy genres were nearly dead and they are the ones who revived them. Personally, it was after seeing a Hammer movie with a French producer and a Spanish producer that we decided to make my first horror film. So Hammer is positive for



Above: *Kluge's Kinski in *Venus in Furs* and a torture scene from *The Bloody Judge*.*

cinema, that's for sure. What happened is that directors like Terence Fisher and Peter Sasdy didn't take it seriously. They didn't commit themselves; they were a little bit outside of the story. It seemed that they were doing this as they could have been doing something else. They weren't true and sincere fans of horror cinema, which is regrettable. If you think about the history of cinema, there are many first-class Horror movies like the first Dr. Mabuse that are amazing, where the director believed in what he was doing and was totally committed. Personally, the movement that I prefer in horror cinema has always been the Expressionist movement. I love what they did and they paved the way for the Universal horror films with Karloff and Lugosi. That's why, among other things, those were extraordinary movies. I always felt that Hammer was cold, too British, that they were somewhat ashamed to make it 100% serious. There was always a softness or humour. They didn't seem totally sincere. Even Christopher Lee didn't completely like these movies. In a way, he was disheartened to be recognised globally as Dracula. I actually feel that's not fair. Not from a commercial point of view, because he became a very famous actor thanks to those films, and in that sense he is unfair when he criticises the genre. When you get to know him a little, when you know who Christopher is, you understand that he is a Shakespearean actor. What he wanted to do was Shakespeare stuff.

What do you think of Christopher Lee?

Christopher is first and foremost a professional; he really is the example of the 100% serious professional who is at the service of the movie. I have never found a more professional actor than him. He might not have liked doing it, but he did it perfectly well, and also, he is a man with an exceptional memory. Once he has rehearsed - even a complex scene with a lot of movements and breaks - he can do twenty-five takes. And he's the ideal man for the camera, because he is always going to stop at the same time. It's perfect. He's even going to say the same sentence at the same time. If we need to stop when he finishes the sentence, he will finish the sentence and we will cut right there. In that respect, he was very proper, very serious, very good. No, in that regard, you can't say a word against him.

The only thing that bugged me personally at the time, not any more, was that he wouldn't really reveal himself. He was that way. The first time he showed a little bit of himself with me was in the movie *Count Dracula* (1970). I think the reason was that he had always wanted to do the real novel by Bram Stoker and he saw that I wanted the same thing. That was the only time in my life, I think, that I changed one of Harry Towers' scripts, because I felt that the words of the novel were much better than what Harry had done to shorten them. He was scared that many of the soliloquies were too long and could become boring, but I managed to convince him that they needed to be kept as originally written.

There is one moment when Christopher has the monologue 'The children of the night, what a beautiful...' and he is fantastic. It was the first time I said, 'He has balls!' From then on we were much more communicative, we understood each other much better. And then when he finished the shooting, he went back to London because he had to shoot Hammer's *Taste The Blood Of*

Dracula with Peter Sasdy. Two weeks later, he phoned me at home and said, 'Jess, I came back from the shooting and I said to my wife, 'Shit, what we did with Jess was much better.' And she said, 'You have to call him and tell him that.' Christopher told me all this on the phone. I was very surprised and I thanked him. You see, I saw him as being a difficult man to understand. I would never have imagined prior to that conversation that he really appreciated my work. However, if Christopher picks up the phone and says that to you, there must be an internal battle going on for him to be able to do that. After that, everything we did together was friendly; we understood each other very well. We didn't ever become great friends, but we did have some very good times together.

What do you think are the finest films you've ever directed?

Every film, when I make it, I like it. Year later, I may not like it so much because I see that I could have done differently. I very much like *Necronomicon* (aka *Succubus*) of my older films and *Dracula Contra Frankenstein*. Of my new films, I like *Mari-Cookie* and the *Killer Tarantula*.

And the worst?

Gritos En La Noche (aka *The Awful Dr. Orloff*) is such a slow, dreary film. People always call it a classic, but I am tired of it. That's why I want so much to remake it! Unfortunately it is not so easy to get finance these days. The film industry has changed a lot since the 70s and now it is mainly the very big budget Hollywood films that get the money and the space in cinemas. We're lucky we have the DVD market for the smaller films to still get seen.

With so many of your more recent films finally arriving in the U.S. market via DVD, do you feel that there's a renewed interest in your work?

My producer allows me to make my films so I make them and then he brings them to audiences. The teenagers in Europe love my films. Interest in my films in America seems to have begun with videotapes, VHS. People in America started to look all over the world to find my films in all their different versions. But now, I see a fresh interest because people are looking for the films I am making currently and not asking me about the ones I made twenty years ago.

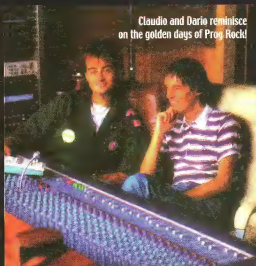
When I'm in America, I'm happy to be so well received when I meet fans of my films when I go to conventions - thousands of fans were in Secaucus, New Jersey to meet me at the Chiller convention. They told me that it was the largest audience ever for that convention at that time. Today, I would say that my films are probably most seen on video and DVD. That is okay, you know. I don't mind that at all.

Years ago, I used to make films with large American box office grosses and they were always in *Variety* - films like *99 Women*. Today, I know that my new films are made for my audience and not for the mainstream audience. But as long as I'm able to make my own films, it is fine for me. After all, what else would I do with myself? •

rock around the



SHOCK!



Claudio and Dario reminisce on the golden days of Prog Rock!

John Martin talks to Claudio Simonetti, the spaghetti soundtrack superstar behind such memorable fear flicks as *Suspiria*, *Deep Red* and *Sleepless*!

Claudio Simonetti may not be a chart-topper in the UK, but he's hugely popular in his native Italy and his unforgettable music with the Prog Rock group Goblin has put the frighteners on us in such horror classics as *Suspiria* and *Down Of The Dead*. We managed to catch up with Claudio on a recent trip to London, and asked him why the devil has all the best tunes!

DVD World: Ciao, Claudio. How has this visit to the UK gone for you?

Claudio: Well, we arrived on Friday and I'm sorry that we're leaving today because I'm really enjoying it. I always do, I have visited Britain many times... I love London.

DVD World: Please tell us something about the time Goblin predecessors Cherry Five came over to London to work with legendary Prog Rock producer Eddie Offord (as immortalised in ELP's *Are You Ready, Eddie?*).



Claudio: Oh sure, we came here in 1974 to play Eddie some demos we had recorded in Italy, he had expressed an interest in working with us and of course we wanted to do that very much. We stayed in London for a while, about two months, and we also played some gigs. We had an American singer at that time, Clive Haynes. He was the original

singer doing Cherry Five stuff. Unfortunately Eddie Offord was very busy at this time, he was on a world tour with The Yes, so we never got to work with him. While we were in London we also recorded new demos, new versions of Cherry Five stuff... I don't remember where, because it was many years ago. After that we went back to Italy and resumed recording in Rome.

DVD World: Your work has been heavily influenced by such English Prog Rock bands as ELP, Yes, Genesis, King Crimson, The Nice...

Claudio: ...and Gentle Giant, sure, I started playing in bands covering the material of those guys. I think everybody in the world was influenced by that music. That was the kind of music I started out playing and it was obviously the big influence on Cherry Five, though subsequently we found our own voice. I think that PFM was the only notable band at that time signed up by Emerson, Lake and Palmer... they were a great Italian band, I saw them in concert around 1973 or 74...

DVD World: In the 70's, any Prog Rock band worth its salt had to come up with a concept album, and Goblin obliged with *Il Fantastico Viaggio Del Bogaorazzo Mark...*. Can you tell us a little something about the concept behind that album?



COLLECTOR'S EDITION

When there's no more room in HELL
the dead will walk the EARTH



GEORGE A. ROMERO'S

DAWN OF THE DEAD

THE ORIGINAL DIRECTOR'S CUT

★★★★Roger Ebert

DVD

CONTAMINATION

Goblin

Claudio: Sure, this was one of the final albums we recorded, in 1978. It's a story about this beetle called Mark and he travels through the insect world, but it's like... how to say? It's a human story, but told in the insect world... how to say it? A metaphor.

DVD World: Better to say an allegory,

probably... When Goblin started working for Dario Argento, did it make you guys nervous that his first three films had been scored by Ennio Morricone? Did you feel apprehensive about following in the footsteps of such a great maestro?

Claudio: Na, when we recorded *Deep Red* we weren't familiar with the work of Ennio Morricone at all. You must remember that in those days Morricone

THE COMPLETE ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

BUIO OMEGA



CD-MDF 304

MUSIC BY **Goblin**

THE ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK



WORLD PREMIERE COMPLETE RECORDING

LA VIA DELLA DROGA

MUSIC COMPOSED, ARRANGED AND PERFORMED

BY **Goblin**

CD MDF 319

was not the legend that he is now. So we were not nervous, no, we were very young and very full of ourselves. We were just glad to have been granted this great opportunity.

DVD World: What were the circumstances under which you took over the scoring of Argento's *Deep Red* from Giorgio Gaslini?

Claudio: When Dario did *Deep Red* he was searching for a band that could play Gaslini's stuff. He wanted Gaslini music but played by a rock band. He listened to the music that we had recorded as Cherry Five, and he liked it

so much that he signed us up to play Gaslini's stuff. After ten days of recording *Deep Red* it was decided that we should come up with more of the music ourselves. Dario and Gaslini had been having disagreements about the music, and Gaslini had a very heavy schedule of concert work... you may not know this, but Georgia was a very famous jazz player. Sa Daria said, 'OK guys, you're on your own.' That was basically our big break, we did the main title music for *Deep Red*, and other themes in the picture. The A-side of the soundtrack album is the music that we composed, the B-side is Gaslini stuff arranged and played by Goblin.



DVD World: Famously, on *Suspiria*, you scored the film before any footage was shot and the actors went through their paces listening to the music. Do you prefer it that way, or the more traditional method of scoring a finished film?

Claudio: That was the only time I wrote music before the film. We read the script and come up with some music. Dario used some of it while he was filming the actors, but afterwards we changed the music. We changed everything, because it is a completely different thing to see a finished film, as opposed to just reading a script. So everything was changed, all the pre-recorded stuff was scrapped.

DVD World: What did you think of Dario's approach to scoring films from the mid-80's onwards - e.g. *Phenomena* and *Demons* - mix-and-matching your original themes with tracks from miscellaneous rock bands?

Claudio: I have to say that I didn't really like that, because it doesn't make for a homogenous soundtrack, you know, it results in something patchy. But it was something that directors were trying at that time, and even now you hear soundtracks that are just compilations of hit songs.

DVD World: Your title theme for *Phenomena* is our personal favourite of all your work. How did you come up with that piece?

Claudio: When Dario was making *Phenomena* he asked me to write the music. I contributed tracks like *Jennifer*, *The Wind* and *Sleepwalking* in collaboration with Fabio Pignatelli, using the Goblin name, but I composed the main title by myself and used my name to



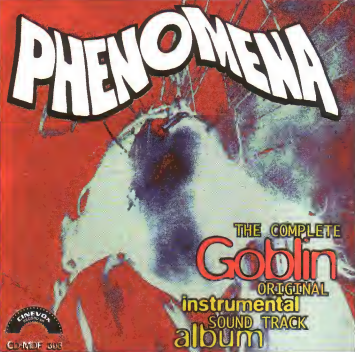
publish it. I remember that I was working in my home studio and I had the idea to put lyrical voices in a track. I called Dario and said I would like you to hear this music. I took the demo to his house, he liked it and decided to use it as the main title... that's all.

DVD World: What are your own favourite film scores from all the ones you've done?

Claudio: Deep Red, *Suspiria* and *Phenomena*, yeah.

DVD World: Many pundits cite the *Zombi/Dawn Of The Dead* soundtrack as one of the high points in Goblin's career, yet very soon after that the band's classic line-up (Simonetti/Morante/Pignatelli/Morogolo) split. What were the pressures that brought this about?

Claudio: After many years of working together we made two albums in 1978, *Il Fantastico Viaggio*, and then *Zombi*. But at this time, at the end of the 70's, Prog Rock was finished, the new era of dance music was arriving. I think that the problem was we had nothing



more to say after all those years of collaborations. A lot of other bands from that era were calling it a day round about this time, too.



together again, you know, because we hadn't played for 22 years together and we are so different from each other now, every one of us likes different types of music. So I think we are not ready to play together again... **Sleepless** will probably be the last collaboration of that classic line-up of Goblin.

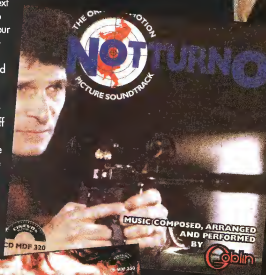
DVD World: You also scored several films for the **Cannibal Holocaust** guy, Ruggero Deodato...

DVD World: As evidence for what you say, when you next contributed to a Dario Argento soundtrack, for **Tenebre**, your main theme had a heavy clap-track going on in the background, and you also used the vocoder...

Claudio: Yeah, because after Goblin I did a lot of dance stuff and when Dario called me to do **Tenebre** the music came out that way. It was impossible for me to use the name Goblin because the bass player, Fabio Pignatelli, owned the copyright of that name with Cinevox.

DVD World: There's been a feeling among Dario's fans for some time now that his work has been going off the boil, but **Sleepless** was welcomed as a return to form, with an original score by the reformed classic Goblin line-up to boot! Does this signal an ongoing resumption of your creative collaboration?

Claudio: It should be, but in fact I think it's going to be the last one. We tried to achieve a reunion of the original Goblin after a separation of over two decades, and we did it because Dario was returning to the thriller format, to the giallo style. I met him in Barcelona at a festival a couple of years ago and he said, "Why not reform Goblin for my next film?" So I contacted my friends and they agreed, but it was very hard to work



Claudio: Yes, **The Washing Machine, Dial Help, Cut And Run and Body Count**. We just collaborated in the usual way as director and composer. Dario is the only one I know who takes such an active role in the scoring of his movies.

DVD World: You also scored **Conquest** for Lucio Fulci. Apparently it was a very troubled production, with Fulci - typically - in dispute with his producer Giovanni di Clemente... do you recall any of these problems?

Claudio: Yeah, I remember di Clemente called me to do this film but Fulci was no longer working on it, because they had argued, so I just went through the music with the editor of the film and never actually met Fulci. I know that everybody thought he was crazy, but I never



TENEBRE

THE COMPLETE ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUND TRACK



MUSIC BY SIMONETTI MORANTE PIGNATELLI

Top: Claudio and the other members of Goblin got back together after a long split to record the score for Dario Argento's **Sleepless**. But it wasn't the happiest of experiences!

witnessed this in the flesh. I am a very good friend of his daughter Antonella. Two years ago we went to a festival in New York where I was playing with my band **Daemonia**, but unfortunately I did not know her father personally.

DVD World: Cinevox recently released a **Goblin's Greatest Hits** CD with a bonus disc comprising a live gig by Goblin from 1979. Is there any more stuff like that waiting in the archives?

Claudio: I really don't know, I can't imagine where they discovered that material because there are not a lot of

live recordings by Goblin, and absolutely no video. It's a great shame because we were a really good live band.

DVD World: Does the longevity of this stuff surprise you - that people are still watching the films and collecting the soundtracks?

Claudio: Oh yeah, of course, because when we played that kind of music in the 70's, Prog Rock was very popular. Now it is completely out of fashion, yet there is still such strong support for the music of Goblin over so many years. It makes us very surprised... and of course very happy! •

ZOMBIE MAESTRO!



As flesh-eating 'ghouls' return to the Allan Bryce looks into the up and down movie career of zombie maestro George Romero...

In case you hadn't noticed, we're slap bang in the middle of a zombie movie revival. The remake of **Dawn Of The Dead** has become one of the highest-grossing horror movies of recent years, and British movies like **Shaun Of The Dead** and **28 Days Later** have similarly proved to be big commercial successes. Even the abysmal **House Of The Dead** and **Resident Evil** flicks have coined it enough for sequels to be on the cards.

But amazingly, nobody has slipped George Romero ten million or so to shoot the fourth in his **Living Dead** series that he has been promising us for years. Surely things must change now? We'll bring you an update later in this article. Meanwhile, let's check out gory George's background...

Born in the Bronx, Romero was 28 when he started shooting **Night Of The Living Dead** for the ridiculously low sum of \$150,000. Everyone working on the film did so virtually for free, including the zombies themselves, who were recruited from the star-struck local populace.

But **Living Dead** wasn't just another low grade schlock piece, and pretty soon people with a bit more critical sense began to take notice, hailing the movie as a terrifying modern day classic of the genre. A couple of years after its initial release it found a niche in the midnight matinee market and began to make a great deal of money.

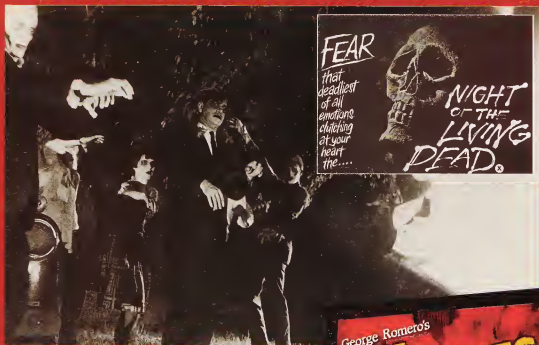
This should have been very good, news for Romero and his fellow investors, but as often happens in the movie business they got ripped off. After various

"expenses" had been taken out by the film's distributors they barely got enough back to finance a second movie, a modest little love story entitled **There's Always Vanilla** (also known as **The Affair**), which to this date has never been released in this country, and nowadays Romero doesn't even include the title in his own filmography. Romero's next movie was equally disappointing: **Hungry Wives** (1973) was a massively overlong (130 minutes) black comedy about a sexually frustrated housewife (Jan White), whose life

changes for the better the day she picks up a book called **How To Become A Witch!** By this time most genre buffs were beginning to think that maybe George Romero was a one-hit-wonder. But with **The Crazies** (1973 - also known as **Code Name Trixie**) he did at least partly get back to **Living Dead** basics, constructing an often intensely exciting fear-fable. Confused plotting and too much shouting and screaming between the principal players prevented it from achieving the power of Romero's earlier horror classic and **The Crazies**



Romero films Judith O'Dea running from 'ghouls' on **The Night Of The Living Dead**.



survivors hole up in a vast shopping precinct where, as in the first movie, they fight themselves as well as the flesh-munching zombies. Here the tone is even more ferocious, as we can see from an intensely bloody sequence near the beginning where a SWAT team storm a sleazy tenement, kicking down doors to blast the living and the dead indiscriminately. When the first victim's head turns into flying tomato puree after being hit at close range by a shotgun blast we know immediately that this movie is not going to show any mercy. Its most valuable asset is the make-up expertise of Tom Savini (who also appears in the film as a vicious biker), which provides an endless display of eye-popping gore effects.

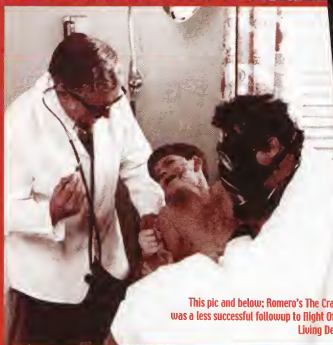
As a guts and gore opus it's hard to beat, but what makes it so memorable, are its disturbing allegorical overtones: the zombies can represent American society as a whole, greedy, selfish, anxious to consume everything in sight.

The massive success of this movie gave Romero the room to breathe and concentrate on such interesting projects as *Martin*, a low key chiller about a disturbed youngster (John Amos) who thinks he's a modern-day vampire and preys on his victims with the aid of a razor blade and hypodermic. In many ways one of Romero's best, and sure to be regarded as a classic in years to come.

Tom Savini appeared in the film, and Romero was so impressed with the make-up man's performance that he gave him a star role in his next production, *Knightriders* (Warner), a strange drama about a travelling commune of motorcyclists and craftsmen who make their living by staging medieval style jousting tournaments on their Harley's. The film championed a hippy lifestyle about ten years after such a thing had gone out of fashion, and did not fare well at the box-office.

After being short-listed to work on *Salem's Lot*, Romero eventually got to work with horror writer Stephen King on *Creepshow* (Warner), a colourful anthology of terror tales penned by King in the style of the EC horror comics of the 50s. It came closer to the feel of the originals than earlier British adaptations (like *Tales From The Crypt* and *Vault of Horror*). But though the film was a box-office success, on the whole it was a minor effort for Romero.

Similarly disappointing was Romero's much-vaunted television series *Tales From The Darkside*. In 1985 Romero began putting all his efforts into writing the screenplay of *Day Of The Dead*. Easily the very least of the trilogy, it is a sombre, slow-moving tale peopled with unsympathetic characters who spend too



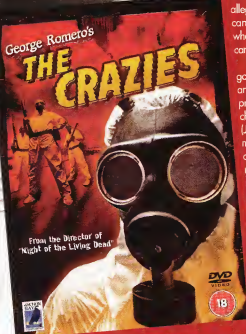
This pic and below: Romero's *The Crazies*, was a less successful followup to *Night Of The Living Dead*...



came and went, proving a modest box-office success.

Meanwhile *Night Of The Living Dead* was going from strength to strength raking in big audiences wherever it played, particularly in Europe, where the film had by now gained a huge cult following. One of its biggest fans was Italian horror expert Dario (Suspiria) Argento, who in the early part of 1977 approached Romero with the prospect of doing a colour sequel. Having apparently always planned a trilogy of *Living Dead* movies Romero readily agreed. And so it was that on November 13th, 1977 the cameras began turning on *Dawn Of The Dead*, a film that would have almost as great an impact on the genre as the original.

Dawn of the Dead begins where the first movie left off, with the country in the throes of a ghostly epidemic that sees the dead returning to life as flesh-eating 'ghouls', the only way to stop them being to shoot 'em in the head. A group of





on his entrails! Many were disappointed that the third in the trilogy was not up to the high standards set by its predecessors. "Well I have to take the blame for that," says George, "because the version that came out was exactly the version that I wrote. It's not the original script, but that was just too big. They said that we could have done it for seven million dollars but then it would have had to be an R-rated movie."

In the original bigger budget version the grunts were living in a compound above ground, which was an old sort of condo development, and the biffins were all underground and there were more zombies. Basically the same thing was going on with a smaller group..."

The box-office failure of **Day Of The Dead** made it hard for Romero to get funding for his next project, which is why it took two years to persuade Orion pictures to ante up the \$7 million

needed to film a bizarre sci-fi thriller called **Monkey Shines**. Based on a novel by Michael Stewart, it stars Jason Beghe as a quadriplegic who is given an experimental, specially trained,

genetically altered Capuchin monkey helmpate. After Beghe develops a psychic bond with the animal, those who frustrate or hurt the

invalid begin to turn up dead under most mysterious circumstances.

Unfortunately, **Monkey Shines** turned out to be a box office failure, and the same fate awaited George's next flick, a stylish adaptation of Stephen King's best-seller, **The Dark Half**. This spent two years languishing on the shelf because its distributors (Orion Pictures) went bankrupt. Since then his name has been attached to a number of projects, none of which have got past the scripting stage. The most notable of these was a new version of the famous old Boris Karloff picture, **The Mummy**. "We had a great script, I really loved it," says George. "It was ready to roll, but we were tied up at the time at MGM on this other project, a thriller called **Before I Wake**, and they wouldn't let us out. So the **Mummy** deal blew up. Two weeks later, after spending a million and a half, they canned it. It's the typical Hollywood runaround, and completely frustrating."

Of course we should also mention the colour remake of **Night Of The Living Dead** that George wrote and produced in 1990, with effects ace Tom Savini at the helm. "My interest in that was purely financial," he states. "We all got ripped off first time round, and I wanted the investors on that film to finally get some money. It also gave me a chance to correct what I saw as a mistake. In the first film, the radiation scenario was the only explanation offered for the dead coming back to life, so that's the one that is always given. That was my biggest pet peeve about the original film, because I didn't think it needed an explanation. I don't care why the dead are coming

back to life, just let me out of here! So in the remake we offered several explanations with a clear



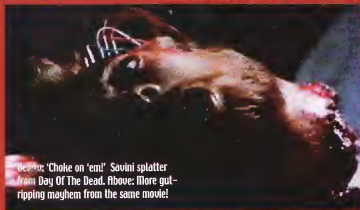
John Amos as the modern-day vampire with a hypodermic in Romero's underrated **Martin**.

much time shouting and swearing at each other (reminiscent of **The Crazies**). **Day Of The Dead** does however have some interesting things to say about the brutal nature of humanity, the human cast gleefully tormenting the

ever done, though they really only come into their own during the horrendous last twenty minutes where we are treated to the sight of the worst baddie being pulled in two while screaming "choke on it!" to the living dead gourmets about to feed

Nobody explodes heads like Tom Savini images from **Down Of The Dead**.





understanding that the people offering them don't know any more than we do. It's just speculation and confusion."

Talking of speculation and confusion, what's the latest on that long-mooted fourth in his zombie trilogy? Romero advises that this film, currently titled **Land Of The Dead**, is definitely an

active project, but it has no set production date and its fate is still uncertain. Among Romero's three currently active features, **Land** is the furthest from production; he has an agreement with Fox Searchlight (which scored a huge hit with Danny Boyle's British zombie movie **28 Days Later**) to write and direct **Land**, but this



is still tentative. "I have other possibilities if Fox drops it," he notes. "I have interest from another place." Romero also reveals that John Carpenter may be involved: "John would like to produce it or do the music."

Searchlight's current concern is that the budget may be too steep, and Romero may have to compromise his original script. "Right now it's pretty expensive, and it might be another situation like **Day Of The Dead** where I have to drop it way back, scale it way down, in order to get it made. Everyone's so afraid of that."

A rights dispute is also delaying progress on **Land**. "I have to do an arbitration with the MPAA over the title, and I don't know how long that's going to take," Romero elaborates that Richard Rubinstein, his former business partner of Laurel Entertainment, has registered the title **Night Of The Living Dead** with the MPAA, despite the fact that Rubinstein did not form his relationship with Romero until long after the original **NOTLD**. Romero only recently joined the MPAA and is unsure when the arbitration would occur. He confirms, "That's what's hanging Land up right now."

The army of zombie wannabes counting on appearing in **Land**, should it reach production, should pack their bags and perhaps prepare their passport for a trip to Canada, where Romero filmed **Bruiser**.

Regarding the prospect of shooting in Pittsburgh again, the director says, "I don't know, I'd love to... but now it's just too expensive. The crews aren't there anymore. So it's tough."

Romero adds that while he definitely won't begin filming any new projects before summer 2004. He believes that the one most likely to go ahead is a horror TV movie he has written and would direct for ABC. The network would want it completed for broadcast around Halloween 2004, though the deal has not been finalised. Romero requests that the particulars of this film not be divulged;



saying only that it's an adaptation of a classic horror tale.

As recently as May 2003, excitement had been building that Romero's next film was to be **The Ill**. The vampire thriller, to be funded by independent unit P-Kino Films, was alleged to begin lensing in Europe in late 2003, and promotional artwork has circulated. Romero says that this is no longer an active project; it is not completely dead, but is currently on the shelf. The director has also been associated with an adaptation of Stephen King's **The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon** for several years, but says he does not yet have a final agreement with a studio for his screenplay. Yet he considers it to be his second most likely project after the ABC movie, and is hopeful that something will start up in 2004, in Canada.

Based on King's novel about a girl who gets lost in the woods and must confront her fears to get out alive, **Tom Gordon** "is sort of a non-horror project," Romero says. "It has a few scary elements, but it's more like **Stand By Me**. It's not what you'd call hardcore horror at all." He goes on to note that he currently has no other non-genre films under consideration.

As regards the **Dawn Of The Dead** remake, co-produced by Richard Rubinstein, Romero confirms that he had absolutely no creative participation in the remake, adding, "I have a small percentage of the action on the title" only, stemming from his former interest in Laurel. Romero will not get any royalties relating to his previous story. Since Rubinstein needed to avoid any rights conflicts with Romero's original story, the mall setting serves as merely a symbolic link to the 1979 classic.

But with the film having sparked such an interest in the Romero original, it surely can't be long now until Fox stumps up the lolly for the long-anticipated **Land Of The Dead**.

That'll be when there's no more room in development hell....

APOCA



LYPSE THEN!

Inspired by the international success of *Mad Max*, 80s Italian filmmakers rushed out to the nearest desert or booked budget plane tickets for the Bronx...

John Martin reports on the post-apocalypse genre flicks that mainly turned out to be bombs!





s a responsible and respected, opinion-forming publication, it's only right that *DVD World* should take a stand on the issue that has been dominating current affairs for some time now... was Tony Blair right to take this great nation to war against Iraq?

It's fair to say that some of the justifications he offered before the conflict now seem discredited. Saddam had no WMDs. He wasn't harbouring Osama Bin Laden... or Lord Lucan... or Elvis. Indeed, it seems increasingly unlikely that he played any part at all in the shooting of JRI! Our smarmy PM stands accused of serving up faulty intelligence in order to whip up a climate of fear. In point of fact, he exercised admirable restraint by refusing to put before the British people the most petrifying evidence of all: during the early '80s, Italian schlock directors established beyond any doubt the nightmare, post-apocalyptic scenario that we faced if nuclear proliferation were left to proceed unchecked.

This Cinecittà dossier was sexed up to include such future perils as dune buggies with drill attachments (*The New Barbarians*), talking motorbikes (*Warrior Of The Lost World*), and pterodactyl hang-gliders (*Wer*). Yep, those ever-resourceful spaghetti exploitation mavens figured that once they'd adopted the patently nonsensical basic premise of anyone actually surviving global thermo-nuclear war (admittedly, their movies would be somewhat lacking in "human interest" if nobody had!), they might as well be nuked for sheep as lambs and throw logic completely out of the window.

Thus their post-apocalyptic landscapes are peopled by roving bands of gay, book-burning nihilists (*The New Barbarians*)... Hare-Krishna survivalists battling hordes of rampaging rodents (*Rats - Night Of Terror*)... self-propagating Popeye clones (*She*)... and any amount of other, equally wacky nonsense that not even Nostradamus could have predicted.

MONSTER MASH

Prior to the 80's, Hollywood had produced plenty of atom-angst movies: firstly, scores of cash-in SF monster-mash

'Yep, those ever-resourceful spaghetti exploitation mavens figured that once they'd adopted the patently nonsensical basic premise of anyone actually surviving global thermo-nuclear war (admittedly, their movies would be somewhat lacking in "human interest" if nobody had!), they might as well be nuked for sheep as lambs and throw logic completely out of the window!'

quickies such as *Them!*, *The Amazing Colossal Man* and Jack Arnold's superior *The Incredible Shrinking Man*; later, more sophisticated dramas like *On The Beach*, *Rail Safe* and of course Kubrick's scorchingly satirical *Dr Strangelove*. Unusually for an Italian film-cycle though, the Italian post-nukes series was not rooted directly in any American cinematic antecedents, rather in real geopolitical events that were taking place on the ground in Europe. Two decades ago, NATO's doctrine of "flexible response" against the supposed Warsaw Pact threat allowed for the fighting of "a limited nuclear war" in Europe, and when the cruise missiles were installed at Greenham Common and elsewhere, many Europeans genuinely feared that Armageddon was just around the corner.

Under such pressures, a recently launched Italian sub-genre of societal breakdown mutated into the post-apocalypse genre proper. That fledgling sub genre, best represented by Enzo G. Castellari (aka Enzo Girolami)'s *Bronx Warriors* (1982), did have definite, easily discernible roots in Hollywood antecedents. Written by Castellari with prolific husband and wife scripting duo Dardano Sacchetti and Elisa Livia Briganti, *Bronx Warriors* is an inventive, hyperkinetic fusion of elements from John Carpenter's *Escape From New York* and Walter Hill's *The Warriors* (with a dash of Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange* and a touch of Norman Jewison's *Rollerball* thrown in for good measure).

Castellari's film also adopts Carpenter's penchant for daffily-named characters, with Trash ("Mark Gregory"/Marco De Gregorio), The Ogre (Fred Williamson), Golem ("George Eastman"/Luigi Montefiori) and Hot Dog (Christopher Connelly) and their respective gangs battling for turf in a Bronx that has previously been abandoned by civil society, whose representatives (in the person of Vic Morrow's "Hammer") have now chosen to claim it back by a programme of genocide.

MUSHROOM CLOUD

Bronx Warriors was such a hit in the U.S. market that a sequel (*Bronx Warriors 2: The Battle For Manhattan* aka *Escape From The Bronx*) was made the following year, running on similar lines but with Henry Silva understandably substituting for Vic Morrow (decapitated in the *Twilight Zone*





debacle) as Trash's megalomaniacal opponent. The intriguing cast for this one featured, as well as Castellari's omnipresent brother Enio Girolami ("Thomas Moore") and one of Castellari's own cameos, an appearance by legendary Italian porn queen Moana Pozzi, who later became a born-again Christian before dying of cancer.

If his *Bronx Warriors* films primed the detonator, then it was Castellari's *The New Barbarians* (also 1982) which ignited the mushroom cloud and shaped the fall-out of subsequent "post-nukes" efforts. Ironically so, because as Castellari himself readily admits: "It's a joke, these silly futuristic cars... It's a bad movie, very bad... a really poor effort!" His verdict is vindicated as early as the title sequence, where the impact of a nuclear explosion (once memorably - not to mention pants-shittingly - described as being like "a

huge furnace door slamming shut in the bowels of Hell") is rendered by what looks suspiciously like a child's sparkler being waved over a small Lego model of New York City.

The balance of the picture comprises a succession of luke-warm retreads of moments from George Miller's *Mad Max II* aka *The Road Warrior* (whose influence over subsequent films has continued unabated, see Kevin Costner's bloated *Waterworld*) and an increasingly spaghetti western-esque ambience. "Timothy Brent" (Giancarlo Prete, a stalwart of Castellari's own spagwests) is the hero with no name (or probably wishes he was, his character having been dubbed "Scorpio"), sore-assed and out to settle a score with Luigi Montefiori's Templars, a faggot cult who like to, er, widen the circle of their friends (and indeed enemies) when they're not torturing holocaust survivors and burning books (on the grounds that: "It was damn books

Above: Humans and aliens slug it out in the search for the world's most fertile woman in Sergio Martino's 2019: *After the Fall of New York*.
Bottom: George Eastman studies a victim of *The New Barbarians*.

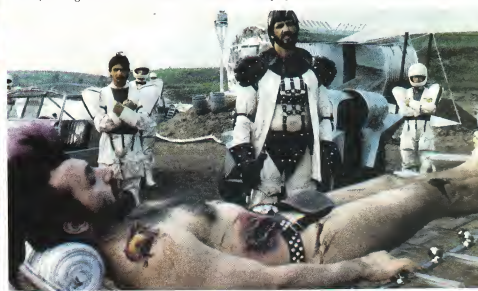
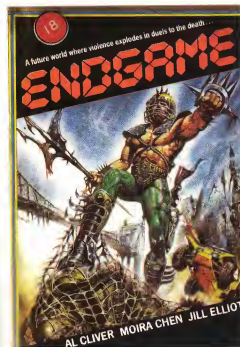


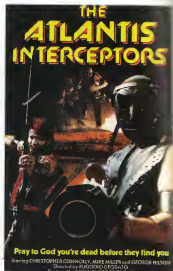
that caused the Apocalypse!"). Unless you're in the right frame of mind to watch total crap (I confess, I frequently am), the sole saving grace of this movie is Claudio Simonetti's driving, percussive score.

Having successfully ripped off *Escape From New York*, *Mad Max 2* and so on, Castellari proceeded to make an even more successful rip-off of *Jaws*, followed by countless other characteristically energetic, imitative (and generally lucrative) exploiters, leaving the post-nukes wasteland open to his peers. Sure enough, the likes of Lucio Fulci, Ruggero Deodato, Sergio Martino and Antonio Margheriti all promptly threw their hats into the radioactive ring.

HANG-GLIDING MONSTERS

Margheriti's entry, *Yor* (a 1984, Italo-Turkish co-production balled down from a TV series) is an ultra-trashy reworking of the central premise to Roger Corman's *Teenage Caveman* (1958, in which adolescent Australopithecus Robert Vaughan ultimately discovers that the *Flintstone*-like world he inhabits is the result of an earlier generation's nuclear war), as is rather given away by the subtitle sometimes appended to it:





sandal school, ever-scowling Gordon Mitchell, who's also in Torino Ricci's *Rush*, Joe D'Amato's *Endgame* and Avi Nesher's *She*. The latter (begun in 1983 as a [relatively] straight H. Rider-Haggard adaptation, then stalled, only appearing in 1985, having been rejigged to include radioactive mutants in the interim) is every bit as bizarre but nowhere near as entertaining as the Margheriti flick. The above-mentioned regenerating Popeye clones are the only thing that stick in my memory from this fiasco (whose soundtrack contributors include Rick Wakeman, Justin Hayward, Motorhead, and a band rejoicing in the name of "Bastard!"), but if you think I'm in any hurry to watch it again, you've got another think coming, buster!

Warrior Of The Lost World, an 1983 Italian-American co-production written and directed by Yank David Worth is a similarly gimmicky vehicle, which tosses a talking motorbike into its derivative mix of plot-points. No David Hasselhoff, thank fuc*, but the film's surprisingly starchy cast of exploitation mainstays does include Donald Pleasence, Fred Williamson, Robert Ginty and *Star Trek*'s Persis Khambatta.

Sergio Martino (as "Martin Dolman") filled his 2019: *After The Fall Of New York* (1983) with knowing Wagnerian references (most pointedly, the mandatory silly character names include "Parsifal!") for those members of the audience who were cultured enough to pick them up. Those who weren't could content themselves with enjoying the schlocky action, as hunky Michael Sopkiw searches for the world's last fertile woman, whom the good guys want to whisk off to another, unspoiled planet - which of course they plan to populate with a new human race.

Although Martino is inarguably an intelligent director, his arch touches can't really disguise the basic formulaic nature of the proceedings here, though there is



Hunter From The Future.

But how did nukes revive the pterodactyl which muscle-brained Reb Brown (to the accompaniment of his truly brain-frying hard-rock theme song) uses as a hang-glider... this isn't a *Rodan* movie, is it? It's little short of astonishing that this jumbled Jurassic lark is just about the most commercially successful item on Margheriti's lengthy, variable but oft-prestigious CV, and I remember him having a hearty belly-laugh on this score when I raised the subject with him.

Underlining the continuity between these Italian apocalypses and the Peplum genre, Yor's cast features an alumnus of the sword and

Right: Lucio Fulci on the set of *Rome 2033: Fighter Centurions* - who can be seen above on their 'futuristic' vehicles!

Top: *The Atlantis Interceptors*, Christopher Connelly and George Hilton.





one amusing final gag (similar to the conclusion of Bob Fuest's *The Final Programme*), as it's revealed that Sleeping Beauty has been impregnated by "The Big Ape" a love-struck simian mutant played by "George Eastman"/Luigi Montefiori (just think of the make-up costs they saved by casting him in this role!)

ATLANTIS - ITALIAN STYLE

Another veteran spaghetti exploiter, Ruggero Deodato (posing as "Roger Franklin") made a tangential entry in the post-Apocalypse stakes with *Atlantis Interceptors* (1983), in which various unspecified eco-unfriendly activities by the human race predictably lead to the lost continent of Atlantis popping up on the Florida coastline, and its rampaging inhabitants (led by Ivan Rassimov) driving around the state in a souped-up battle-truck, terrorising terrans. Christopher Connelly, spagwest veteran George Hilton, superspade Tony King, gorgeous Gioia Maria Scola (subsequently exposed as a dope-crazed gangster's moll) and one "Michael Soavi" become urban guerrillas to dispatch the invaders' asses back to the depths of Davey Jones' locker in this amusing effort.

Lucio Fulci's *Rome 2033: Fighter Centurions* (1983, aka *Ben Hur Vs Spartacus* in America, as if to emphasise those Peplum connections) is another marginal effort, a portrayal of a dystopian future with no actual mention of there having been a nuclear holocaust. In this one the corrupt ruling classes keep the masses happy with bread and circuses, the latter comprising gladiatorial motorbike competitions in which Jared Martin (a poor man's David Warbeck who later starred in *Dallas*) excels. The film is an investigation of the ethics of presenting violence as mass entertainment, a theme Fulci would expand on, to quite astonishing effect, in his later *The Cat In My Hat*. Admittedly *Fighter Centurions* owes a



The hilarious *Rats! Nights Of Terror*. It's a well-known fact that radioactive rats will not attack you if you set yourself on fire and run around really fast...

certain amount to *Rollerball*, but it was itself extensively ripped off by Paul Michael Glaser's nominal Stephen King adaptation, *The Running Man*, as was Joe D'Amato's *Endgame* (1983). Incredible as it may seem, given his track-record (and D'Amato had already turned in a mediocre "post-nukes" outing, *2020: Freedom Fighters*, after his protégé Luigi Montefiori abdicated the reins on what was supposed to be his directorial debut), D'Amato's *Endgame* is one of the best pictures to emerge from this cycle, adding surprisingly subtle touches (such as Laura Gemser - giving one of the best performances in her career - as one of a mutant race of telepaths who must refrain from violence because they would participate psychically in the pain of their victims) to the bare bones of its "Luigi Montefiori vs Al Cliver (aka Pier Luigi Conti) in televised grade match" storyline.

Less impressive efforts include *Exterminators Of The Year 3000* (1983), an Italo-Spanish production directed by "Jules Harrison" (Giuliano Carnimeo) and a brace by "Anthony Richmond" (Tonino Ricci), *Rush, The Assassin* (1983) and its semi-sequel *Rage* (1984, aka *Rush 2*). The first picture stars "Conrad Nichols" (Luigi Mezzabotte) as Rush, resistance leader of a

bunch of post-nuke proles forced to labour in sterile plastic greenhouses because all the vegetation outside has supposedly been destroyed by radiation. Less astute critics complained that "the entire last third of the film takes place in an Italian forest", but they've missed the whole goddamn point (one pinched from Philip K. Dick's novel *The Penultimate Truth*), namely that the whole dying ecosystem story was a scam, perpetrated to keep the loiling masses - quite literally - in their place. *Rage* contains one of magazine editor Richard Marshall's all-time favourite lines of dialogue, i.e. "It won't be easy, building up a new world... but there's no harm in trying!"

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD BOMB DOWN

Nice to close on an unintentionally hilarious one-liner, but if you want the end of your world served up with some giggles instead of a bang, you'll find the mother lode in Bruno Mattei's totally ludicrous *Rats - Night Of Terror* (1984). Mattei, who would give the world a pedantically eco-conscious undead D. J. in *Zombie 3* (1988), and had already turned his *Zombie Creeping Flesh* (1981) into a doomsday scenario featuring the first (and hopefully last) zombie rat in screen history, here depicts mankind's last stand against hordes of cute, furry, squeaky (totally uncanny) rodents.

Although you can see it coming a country mile away, this picture's hilarious "twist" ending is (like the rest of the film) so ineptly rendered as to be worth its weight in fool's gold. The genre Enzo Castellari had inaugurated with *The New Barbarians* petered out in the likes of *The Final Executioner* (1984) and *Bronx Executions* (1989), both directed (appropriately enough) by his uncle Romolo Girolami, under the guises "Romolo Guerrieri" and "Bob Collins" respectively. The former is actually rather good, and certainly the clearest statement yet of the affinities between this sub-genre and the spaghetti western: William Mang restores order to a town where survivalist yuppies have been preying on the dregs of radiation-scarred humanity, with spagwest icon Woody Strode along for the ride. Strode also stars in *Bronx Executions*, alongside *Zombie Creeping Flesh* victim Margit Evelyn Newton, though I've yet to track this title down, pards (likewise 1989's *Urban Warriors*, directed by "Joseph Warren"/Giuseppe Vart and scripted by superannuated spaghetti hack Pietro Regnoli).

These efforts were nothing more than a belated coda to a genre whose commercial half-life had long expired in the trend-conscious Italian industry. Indeed, internationally post-apocalypse offerings tailed off dramatically in the run up to the fall of Communism.

You can't keep a good bomb down though, the likes of *Miracle Mile* and *True Lies* demonstrating there's always capital to be made from playing on people's worst fears, particularly if you're an inveterate fantasist of the calibre of Steve De Jarnatt, James Cameron or Tony Blair...●

UNCLE JOE'S HARD CORE HORRORS

John Martin
pays tribute to
the late great
exploitation movie
Joe D'Amato - and
his host of
alter-egos!

George Eastman in a scene from
Joe D'Amato's *Absurd*, a film
that lives up to its name!

If any one moment could be said to encapsulate the death of Italy's once proud but long-declining exploitation film tradition, it might well be the precise moment on January 23rd, 1999, when something in the region of a half century of film makers simultaneously lost their lives. At a stroke, the world was robbed of the talents of Jairo Alvarez, Donno Aubert, Steve Benson, Pierre Bernard, Boy Ton Bien, John Bird, Jim Block, Alexandre Barsky, Kent Bruno, James Burke, Alex Carver, Lee Castle, Lynn Clark, O. J. Clarke, Hugo Clevers, Dorio Donati, Richard Franks, Dirk Frey, Philippe Fromont, Romano Gastaldi, Robert Hall, Richard Haller, David Hills, Igor Horvess, Hsu Hsien, George Hudson, John Larson, Gerry Lively, Young Sean-Bean Lui, Kevin Monaco, Peter Mancuso, Andrea Mossai, Peter Newton, Una Pierre, Zak Roberts, John Russell, Tom Salimo, John Shadow, Federico Sianich, Dick Spitfire, Chang Lee Sun, Michael Watroub, Robert Yip and, most (in)famously, Joe D'Amato. Ueaz, I've virtually used up my word allocation already!

The uninitiated might well be wondering at this point which film festival was bombed, but the reason for a line being drawn under so many illustrious CVs on 23/01/99 was in fact that all of these auteurs had been incarcerated in the single, pseudonym-addicted form of one man, the notorious Aristide Massocacci (and yes, he sometimes signed his pictures with his actual name...) who died suddenly of a heart attack while arguing about lost luggage in a Roman airport.

Massocacci, born 15/12/36 in The Eternal City, cut his film teeth shooting Vespa commercials and assisting the likes of Franca Zeffirelli and Jean Luc Godard. He himself harboured an art-house aspirations though, preferring to set out his stall as a craftsman in the unashamedly commercial arena of Italian popular cinema.

No doubt his stint as assistant to the legendary Mario Bava (on *Hercules In The Haunted World*, 1961) contributed greatly to

the growing prowess as a DP for which Massocacci became recognised. His philosophy of cinema, once he had become a director, could be summed up in the answer to the title of his 1977 movie

Emanuelle - Why Violence Against Women?

"Sex and gore are timeless trends, the joint backbone of the Italian film industry", he affirmed. This indefatigable Sultan of Sleaze mixed sex and horror in delirious dollops for the likes of 1979's **Blue Holocaust** (which combines gory serial murder, obsessive love, black magic, necrophilia and the nauseating spectacle of deranged taxidermist Kieran Carter - probing his dead girlfriend's G spot); 1976's **Emanuelle In America** (scenes of girl/horse love and Gemser's Emanuelle infiltrating a snuff movie ring whose chillingly convincing efforts - don't worry gang, FX aces Giannetto De Rassi and Maurizio Trani were responsible - allegedly "inspired" David Cronenberg to make **Videodrome**).

There there was the following year's **Emanuelle And The Last Cannibals/Trap Them And Kill Them**, which featured much rump-pump, plus a troupe of spaghetti all-stars (Gemser, her hubby Gabriele Tinti, Susan Scott, Donald O'Brien, etc), being dispatched by the titular flesh eaters amid a welter of clumsy gore effects; and 1982's **Caligula 2: The Untold Story** which monoged the considerable feat of out-sleazng Tinto Brass's original (more sex with horses, swords disapproving up the arses of unfortunate senators, boxing matches with spiked knuckle-clusters substituting for gloves, Michele Soavi having his tongue cut out, being hamstrung and then jacked off by an Imperial concubine with the name of "Clitio"...) Even when working with the voluptuous

Serena Grandi, whose pneumatic farm is more often showcased in a cheeseecake context by other Italian directors, Massocacci contrived to have



Joe enjoys a Don't Look Now moment with Serena Grandi

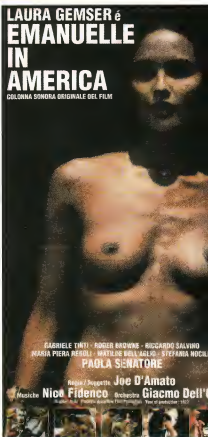
Eastman/Monteferri jump up and down on her supposedly pregnant belly in **Anthrophagous Beast** (1980), then gorge his face on a skinned rabbit that was intended to convey her miscarried foetus. "Serena was a true professional - in fact I remember she was very serene about the whole thing!" Jolly Uncle Joe used to jest when recalling this DPP favourite, which was cited as one of those mythical "snuff movies" in the UK gutter press and TV news reports. "Absolutely mad..." laughed Massocacci when I reminded him of this, "... because it was just a rabbit, you know? And I had a problem with **Blue Holocaust** because people said it featured a real dead body. I made this movie called **Emanuelle In America**, and we shot the 'snuff' scenes in 35mm, afterwards we scratched the negative and we printed it as 8mm then blew it up to give the illusion of reality... I don't why people believe that we Italians are really killing people and putting their bodies in our films... it's just some bullshit, it's only a movie, you know?"

If you thought any of those above-mentioned epics were labouring under ludicrous premises, wait till you get a load of the self-explanatory **Erotic Nights Of The Living Dead** (1979). Massocacci himself has admitted that such scenes as the one in which a woman has anal sex with a zombie are "too ridiculous for words." It's difficult to disagree.

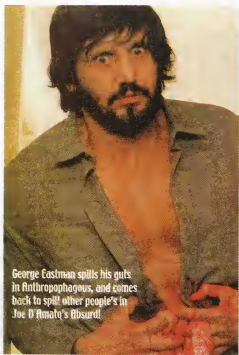
Our hero rolled off this particular opus during his "Caribbean period", which also yielded such firm family favourites as **Porna Holocaust**, **Black Sex**, **Black Orgasm**, **Hard Sensation**, and **Papaya Dei Carabai** (whatever that means). Several of these storied nature girl Sirpo Lone from Borowczyk's **The Beast**.

Massocacci had been directing soft-core sex-flicks since the likes of **Diary Of A Roman Virgin** and **Ucentiaus Tales Of Lusting Virgins** (both 1973) and 1975's "hell hath no fury..."

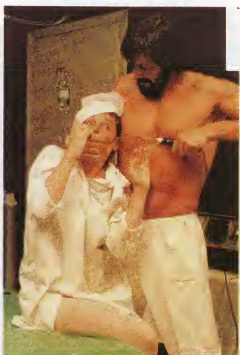
ago **Blood Vengeance** aka **Emanuelle And Françoise**. Things really got going,



though, when he hijacked the "Black Emanuelle" (note the single "m", would-be trash film experts) series, initiated by Adolberto Albertini's **Emanuelle Nera**. **Black Emanuelle 2 Goes East** (1976) was the expected bankboston, involving Gabriele Tinti and Ivan Rissimov. In the same year, Massocacci teamed his new muse with Tinti, again, plus Jack Polance (yes, Jack Polance!) in the soft-core romp **Eva Nera/Black Cabra**, and "supervised" Ilios Mylanakas's direction of his protégé in the blackmail story **Emanuelle, Queen Of Sadas**. The following year he had Gemser walking **The Street Of Prostitution** and in 1978 he fearlessly exposed (and briefly appeared in) **Porna Nights Of The World Part 2**



George Eastman splits his guts in *Anthropophagous*, and comes back to split other people's in Joe D'Amato's *Absurd!*



Sarah: Touch me - I'm all wet
Michael: Where are your panties?
Sarah: I ate them



A scene from *Emanuelle* in America's brutal "snuff" model

(a run-of-the-mill mondo effort - Mossocessi is also rumoured to have made an Aids documentary entitled *The Killer Plogue*), before probing *Erotic Imaginings In A Convent* (1979, with Paolo Senatore). The same year's ultra-tasteful *Ladies' Doctor* explored all the erotic possibilities of gynaecology (including fibroids, polyps, prolapses and nasty discharges, one imagines), before Mossocessi opened *The Pleasure Shop On 7th Avenue* (with Anna Maria Clementi, Brigitte Petroniaz, and *House On The Edge Of The Park's* Christian Borromeo) for business.

The period 1980-4 saw the Mossocessi machine going into hard-core overdrive, spewing out titles such as *Blue Erotic Climax*, *Super Climax*, *Infernal Orgasm*, *Porno Holocaust*, *Super Porno Video*, *Super Porno Inheritance*, *The Porno Investigator*, *Delicious Eroticism*, *Greedy Mouth*, *Wet Lips*, *Sour Sex*, *Hot Perfume Of A Virgin* and *The Perverse World Of Beatrice*. "In the hard-core years we used to make five or six pictures in a couple

of months, like on assembly line," our Moin Mon remembered.

Always one to get maximum mileage out of his source material, Mossocessi re-cut footage from *Block Cobra/Erotic Eva* with new hardcore material (in which the immortal Mark Shonnard substituted for Jack Palance), and dubbed the resulting mess *Porno Erotic Love*. Sometimes he looked slightly further afield for his plots: "When we lacked inspiration for the stories, we would thumb through a magazine published by the Catholic Cinema Centre, with reviews and synopses of all the movies they disapproved of". In a masterstroke of ingenuity, Mossocessi ripped off both *The Blue Lagoon* and *Paradise* in an effort entitled (reasonably enough) *Blue Paradise*, and attributed the direction of the picture to its bimbo star Anna Bergman - who is indeed Ingmar Bergman's daughter, though no significant amount of earnest art-house types (nor anybody else for that matter) were thus suckered into going to see the thing.



Sexy Black Emanuelle Laura Gemser starred in many films featuring D'Amato saucel

In the mid-eighties, after the commercial success of **The Key** by Tinto Brass, whom Massocesi considered his erotic avatar, he virtually abandoned hardcore for several years (though he still managed to perpetrate an outrage entitled **Blue Erotic Animal Job** in 1986) in favour of glossy, on-market soft-core. 1985's **The Alcove**, formerly available on Jezebel video, is probably his finest erotic offering, and features Laura Gemser's career-best performance as an Abyssinian princess who, having been brought to Italy as a sex slave by aristocratic Al Cliver, proceeds to destroy his corrupt family with sexual rigour. This allegorical examination of Mussolini's half-cocked imperialist adventure stands as an ambitious effort, even if, in the final analysis, Massocesi doesn't quite, or pull it off.

In the same year he teamed Gemser with Uli Carati and Isabelle Andreo Guzon in **The Pleasure**, a reworking of the Jaime Lee Curtis/Stacey Keatch vehicle **Love Letters** in which a wealthy strumpet sets out to have her virginity taken by her mother's former. Also in '85, the naughty run ramp **Le Manzo Nel Peccato** and sex comedy **Delizia** were attributed to "Carlo Donati", a nod to Massocesi's long-time associate, Danella Donati.

In the following year's **Lussuria**, Massocesi appears to be attempting an homage to the styles of the two Italian sex filmmakers he acknowledged as his masters: Tinto Brass and Salvatore Samperi. Though released by Jezebel as **Lust** (which, confusingly enough, was also the title used by cheapjack video outfit Midas

for their shoddy release of **The Alcove**: seal of quality, my ass! - everything those guys touched turned into remainder-racked shit!) its title is more accurately translated as **Luxury**.

In 1987 (the same year that he produced what many people regard as the last great "giallo" thriller to emerge from the land of the big boot, Michele Soavi's **Stagfright**), Massocesi moved away from the vague political/historical / sociological pretensions of these films to straight exploitation of the (inexplicable) success of Adrian Lyne's **9 1/2 Weeks** with **Eleven Days, Eleven Nights**. On a New Orleans Ferry, a gamessy yuppie named Michael - eleven days away from marriage to his childhood sweetheart - is seduced by Sarah ("Jessica Moore" aka Lucia Ottaviani) on research for her book **Sarah And Her 100 Men**. Before doing the right thing by his blushing bride, Michael gets up to the expected shenanigans with Sarah (egged on by editor Laura Gemser), including the mandatory "licking the contents of a fridge off each other" scene... ho hum! For my money, the most amusing moment in the picture is the following exchange of dialogue:

Sarah: Touch me - I'm all wet

Michael: Where are your panties?

Sarah: I ate them

There's just no stopping these passionate Italians, is there?

Clearly an attempt to string together an '80s equivalent of the shop worn Emanuelle franchise, and supposedly based on the autobiographical erotic writings of

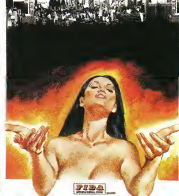
LAURA GEMSER LA VERA EMANUELLE

IN FOTOGRAFIA PUBBLICA

MONDRIAN PER SOLE D'INFERNO • LEI SOLO NEL PANTOFOLINO • QUARTO PIANO SOTTO MASSOCESI

LA VERA EMANUELLE IN UNO DEI SUOI FILMI • CON IL SUO PANTOFOLINO

LA VERA EMANUELLE • LA VERA EMANUELLE • LA VERA EMANUELLE



LAURA GEMSER EMANUELLE IN AMERICA
GABRIELE TINTO FISHER EPICURE - RICCARDO SPINNO
PAULA SENSITIVE

Emmanuelle Arsan-figure Sarah Asproan (which turns out to be an alias for Rossella Drudi) rather than the suspected Massocesi pseudonym), sequels were duly lensed, though none of them featured

Moore/Ottaviani. Perversely enough, another Massocesi picture she did appear in, **Top Model** (1988) was released over here as **11 Days 11 Nights 2...** confused? (You will be!) In this one Cliff Evans (James Sutterfeld) is a crazy mixed-up kid who can't decide whether he's straight or gay. Out of the kindness of her heart, Sarah resolves to demonstrate to Cliff the superiority of the female orifice as an object of desire, going at her task with predictable gusto. Considering that the film is composed almost entirely of capulation scenes, it seems a bit hypocritical when Moore is given the line: "sex isn't everything" to mouth. **Dirty Love** (also 1988) cashed in on an **Dirty Dancing**, with a spot of **Flashdance** thrown (or should I say tossed) in for good measure. The following year's brace, **Blue Angel Cafe** and **Wall Street Woman**, were glossy, gutless efforts starring the very unlikely Tara Buckman.

Massocesi himself often stated that he found soft-core movies more gratifying, both personally (he was a self-confessed voyeur) and professionally (because they offer more scope for creativity) than hard core with its mechanical, by-the-numbers routines and interminable close-ups of genital genitalia.

"Actors in this genre don't need to be too intelligent", he once opined: "... all they have to do is concentrate on their hard-ons." Hey Joe, our readers have been doing that for years!

Despite such reservations, in the early '90s Massocesi resumed his prolific efforts



in this field. "I am not an auteur, you know", he disarmingly confessed: "so I'm not ashamed of my hardcore work." During this period he lensed porno versions of the lives and loves of sundry historical figures (**Marco Polo**, **Al Capone**... you got the impression he was waiting for Mother Theresa to pop her saintly dugs so that he could begin detailing her hitherto undisclosed participation in anal sex orgies) and such mythical personages as Aladdin and Tarzan, among others, not to mention getting involved in - get this! - the Sarah Young version of Hamlet. In an even more bizarre film twist on his career, Massocesi mounted a series of hard-core sagas featuring oriental casts (**Chinese Kama Sutra**, **The Dream Of The Ted Room** and **Sex And Chinese Food**) and utilising his most outlandish pseudonyms yet, including the aforementioned Boy Tan Bien and Young Sean-Bean Lui.

At the time of his death the inexhaustible Aristide Massocesi was contemplating both a return to the horror genre and a skin-flick entitled **The Ultimate Emanuelle**, the... er... climax of which he envisaged as a scene that would involve Laura Gemser and Sylvia Kristel enjoying a lesbian romp on top of a Himalayan mountain. The mind fog baggels!

In conclusion, a few well chosen words from beyond the grave by the great man himself, concerning all of those aliases... "When I first started directing I made three movies, and the credit was going to 'Dick Spillre' or whoever, because I wanted to keep cinematography as my main job, then **Death Smiles On A Murderer** came out under my real name, Aristide Massocesi, because I had decided at that point that I wanted to pursue this career in directing. Then there was a period in Italy where East European directors were in vogue, so I called myself 'Michael Wotruba' for a while, purely as a marketing move. Later it seemed that all the successful American directors were people like Scorsese and De Palma, so we tried to find a name that would make people think of an Italian-American director, and we saw the name 'D'Amato' on a sexy calendar, so that was it. It was the same thing recently when I made **Chinese Kama Sutra**, because in Italy movies like **The Red Lantern** were making a fortune. So I made this movie in the Philippines in 1993, and nobody knew that it was me because I called myself 'Chong Lee Sun'..."

A rose by any other name... ●

FRANCO SPEAKING!



Cult favourite Jesus Franco has seen many of his best movies released on DVD in the UK recently. We caught up with him recently for an informal chat!

Though Spanish-born filmmaker Jess Franco has been credited with directing more than 170 feature-length films over the past 45 years, under no less than 40 different aliases (which include Clifford Brown, John O'Hara, Manfred Gregor and even Betty Carter), there are many cinemaniacs who probably aren't all that familiar with this mad king of exploitation cinema.

Franco's flicks don't pop up on cable frequently and aren't exhibited at the local multiplex. A glance at the cult shelf at a more eclectic video retailer is probably the best way to gain an audience with the work of this sensationally sinister sear.

The maverick filmmaker's mammoth output in the thriller, erotica and horror genres includes such recent Stateside releases as *Incubus* (2002), *Helter Skelter* (2000), *Lust for Frankenstein* (1998), *Mari-Cookie and the Killer Tarantula* (1999), and *Tender Flesh* (1996), which feature such video-friendly lasses as Amber Newman, Linnea Quigley, Manique Parent and Lina Romay, Franco's significant other for the past three decades.

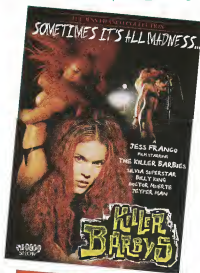
These five titles, like the rest of his extensive CV, are the inimitable work of a filmmaker who, quite simply, does whatever he wants and doesn't censor his vision, the yield being a collection of low-budget works that are at once violent, sexy and often disturbing.

DVD World: Your work and its subject matter is often considered controversial -



racily and over-the-top genre films with a distinctive bite, if you will. How did you come to create these inimitable pieces?

Jess Franco: I have always been a fan of cinema and when I was growing up in



Spain we could only see films that were heavily cut and censored. I always wanted to make films, and to make films with full flavour. I enjoy telling stories in my way and I hope that's what my fans will like.

DVD World: You've been unofficially credited with directing at least 170 films under a slew of assumed names. Why so many different names?

Jess Franco: Sometimes for official reasons. We used to have to fill quotas when making films in certain countries. So a German film, for example, needed to have a German director. So, Jesus Franco would become Jess Frank. Other times, I like to give homage to people who are my heroes in film and music, so I'll use a name to give homage to them.

DVD World: How have you gone about financing your films over recent years? Sometimes you appear to be a director-far-hire.

The Official Jess Franco Collection

Josephine Chaplin

Klaus Kinski

JESS FRANCO'S

JACK THE RIPPER



"Classy!"

-- The Video Graveyard

DVD VIDEO

18

'Klaus Kinski is - was - a crazy man, but very gifted and talented. I think he is excellent in my film Jack the Ripper.'



and **Dracula Contra Frankenstein**. Of my new films, I like **Mari-Cookie** and the **Killer Tarantula**.

DVD World: And the worst?

Jess Franco: **Gritos En La Noche** (aka **The Awful Dr. Orloff**) is such a slow, dreary film. People always call it a classic, but I am tired of it. That's why I want so much to remake it!

DVD World: And how about the most controversial?

Jess Franco: Why would I consider my films to be controversial? I make the stories I like, but it is up to the audience to say what is controversial, not me.

DVD World: You've worked with one of our

favourite lunatic actors, the late Klaus Kinski. Any good Kinski stories for us?

Jess Franco: Klaus Kinski is - was - a crazy man, but very gifted and talented. I think he is excellent in my film **Jack the Ripper**. He is, I believe the first person to tell the story that caused the rumours that I would make more than one film of a time because I would shoot so much footage of him. A reporter asked him one time, "What films did you make with Jess Franco?" and Kinski told him something like, "I don't know - Jess is making so many films on the set that you have to ask him. That was not true, but Kinski is so crazy that people believed him. Now everybody thinks I'm shooting one film but making another."

DVD World: With so many of your more recent films finally arriving in the UK, market via DVD - Anchor Bay have great discs of **Jack the Ripper**, **Barbed Wire Dolls**, **Love Camp** and others - do you feel that there's a renewed interest in your work?

Jess Franco: DVD is a very great invention. It enables movies to

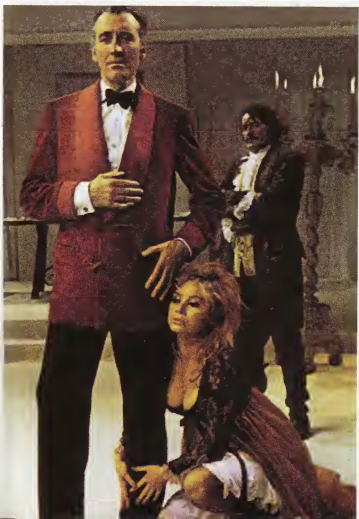
Jess Franco: No, not at all. There are always times when a director must make a film he does not like to make. But I'm lucky in these years to have a strong tie with my American producers who accept my projects and then arrange for the financing. If someone wants to hire me to make a film it must be a film that I like. Over the past few years, I've been asked to make about 4 or 5 films that I haven't liked. So I haven't done them.

DVD World: What do you think are the finest films you've ever directed?

Jess Franco: Every film, when I make it, I like it. Years later, I may not like it so much because I see that I could have done it differently. I very much like **Necronomicon** (aka **Succubus**) of my older films



Above right: Jess Franco's other half, the lovely Una Romay, who also starred in many of his movies.
Right: Girls will be girls in quality tesbo action from Franco's **Eugenie**.
Opposite page: Christopher Lee won't let having his leg stroked by a beautiful woman put him off composing his Oscar acceptance speech for Franco's **Justine**...



be seen in the best possible way, so that very old movies can look brand new. You know, my producer allows me to make my films so I make them and then he brings them to audiences. The teenagers in Europe love my films. Interest in my films in America seems to have begun with videotapes, VHS. People in America started to look all over the world to find my films in all their different versions. But now, I see a fresh interest because people are looking for the films I am making currently and not asking me about the ones I made twenty years ago.

It's not that I am ashamed of my old films. Far from it, but I am very happy when people ask me questions about **Tender Flesh** and **Mari-Cookie** and **Vampire Blues**, because I know that people in the U.K. are interested in me right now. When I'm in England, I'm happy to be so well received when I meet fans of my films when I go to conventions. Today, I would say that my films are probably most seen on video and DVD. That is okay, you know. Years ago, I used to make films with large American box office grosses and they were always in **Variety** - films like **99 Women**. Today, I know that my new films are made for my audience and not for the mainstream audience. But as long as I'm able to make my own films, it is fine for me. •



LICKERISH ALLSORTS!



DVD World celebrates the career and movie of cult filmmaker Radley Metzger, the genius who turned "softcore" into a dirty word!



trade in commercial sex. The influence of New York's blend of culture and carnality was presumably crucial in infusing formative Radley with an appreciation of erotic blypax conducted in

the mid-1970s. Of the five penetrating Henry Paris sex flicks, three are all-time classics: *The Private Afternoons of Pamela Mann* (1975), *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (1976) and *Barbara Broadcast* (1977).

Will the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences ever get over their shock and dismay at Radley's lapse into splooge FX and enliven their awards ceremony with a five-minute tribute displaying highlights culled from, to name only a few of Metzger's sexually stimulated, but super stimulated, oeuvre, *Carmen, Baby* (1967), *Therese and Isabelle* (1968) and *The Lickerish Quartet* (1970)? Probably it will. Right after the presentation of Russ Meyer's lifetime achievement Oscar.

Where Meyer's turbo-charged brand of titillation was manifestly American, Metzger farroed somewhat further afield. A studied master of art-house aesthetics, Radley shodded his epics of gender politics and sexual power trips in washes of decadent European apulence. He favoured Mediterranean locations, source materials from French literature, lighting that

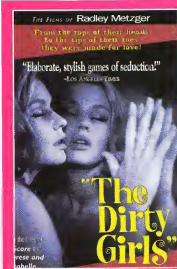
grand style. Inspired, intrepid and indomitable, he closed out the 1960s and kicked off the 1970s by creating a string of serious, sexually themed masterpieces that rival the best pictures from any of the acknowledged foreign movie-making geniuses of the era whose work is film-school fodder today.

Unfortunately for any hopes of establishing a legacy among the "legitimate" entertainment and academic industries, Radley Metzger took a slight detour under the name Henry Paris into full-contact pornographic productions during

gripping characterisation, fluid camera movement and precise, predatory focus that draws a viewer into a world of sensual privilege and thrusts him to the fore of the action, and ethereally beautiful women stripped to the bare writhing essence of longing, repulsion, surrender and dominance are the raw ingredients of art, then Radley Metzger is an artist.

Radley Metzger was born and bred in New York City, a metropolis renowned for its museums, art-house theatres and bustling

Whenever two or more jaded cannaisseurs of visual stimulation gather together in discussion of hard-R and XXX-rated Sinema, the term softcore is generally tossed off as an expression of derision. It's time for all hardened jerkafts to expand their conception of filmed erotic splendour and look back in wonder at the wrist-wringing works of Radley Metzger, an undisputed wizard of simulated ohhs. If splendid sets, engaging plots, emotionally



duplicated the mysterious revelations of renaissance painting, and fine-boned beauties whose translucent complexions and svelte, buoyant figures showed every sign of flawless Old World pedigrees.

So dust off your passport and journey down to your local DVD outlet or online retailer and inhabit the unique pleasures of world's as created by the artist who should be much more widely known as Radley Metzger. Prepare to be overwhelmed in the most sensually understated way that could possibly be imagined.

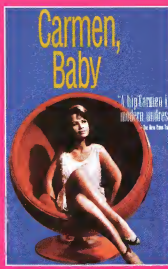
THE MOVIES

CARMEN, BABY (1967)

A steamy tale of a pussy-whipping gypsy dancer and the obsessive stalker soldier who kills her, Carmen was rescued from obscurity by Georges Bizet's opera of the same name (1874). Jealous, small-minded critics panned Bizet's adaptation as "immoral" and "law," but Bizet had the lost laugh. His has become one of the highest grossing operas of all time, and then became the foundation for the lush, sinful and scenic constructs of Radley Metzger's stylish, twisted *Carmen, Baby* (1967). In Metzger's somewhat-dated update from 35 years ago, the titular Carmen is played by busty and sultry Uta Lohz. Uta's full-figured concupiscence is incapable of the manipulative conniving of the original's femme fatale. This mantrop has no control over the furry animal running wild between her thighs. Carmen as the groovy '60s Euro swinger doesn't intentionally lead a local cop astray; corrupting him with boozey promiscuity and casual-sex sairness. The star's innocently lustful body and unabashed sexuality are simply nature's way of saying that moles are doomed to folly and tragedy. The only safe way to handle such high voltage eroticism is in the doses of sophisticated titillation doled out by Metzger in this lavish descent into the milieu of Riviera crooks and scam artists. Monster shivers, no. Monstrously hot, yes.

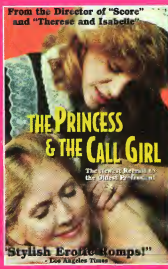
THERESE UND ISABELLE (1968)

The mons-rubbing romance between



syphilike adolescent girls who are confined to a European finishing school is one of male sexuality's most enduring fantasies. Metzger's lingering, haunting black-and-white rhapsody to one woman's memory of her first love beautifully realises every man's dream of girlhood same-sex exploration. Set in the French countryside and taking its cues from Viollette Leduc's opera *Therese and Isabelle* (1954), this lyrical remembrance of budding adolescent sexuality is as seductive as an adult dream.

Metzger imbues two girls riding bikes through a tree-lined lane with greater erotic mystique than most XXX directors can cram into a double penetration. The nudity is slow coming in *Therese and Isabelle*, but the build up of exquisite pressure is constant and ever more pleasurable. If a touch of guilt is triggered along with the ache of arousal as two naked girls loll full screen after their fevered groping, just repeat this mantra: "These are adult women. They are only pretending to be statutory children." The actresses, Essy Persson as "Therese", who has sleepily wandered back into the defining erotic relationship of her past, and Anna Grael as the hypnotic abject of desire, "Isabelle," bring an edgy, wail's reality to underage lesbianism that no amount of exposure to the man-hating diesel dykes of this world can dispel.

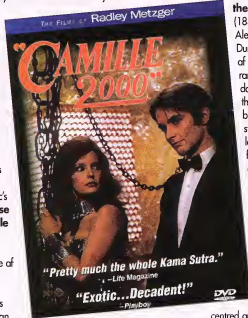


CAMILLE 2000 (1969)

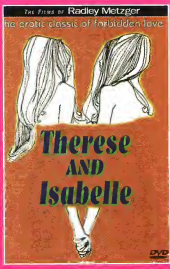
Dipping once more into the well of French literature to draw the skeleton of his plot, Metzger puts a late-'60s spin on the tragic

The Lady of the Camellias

Alexandre Dumas fils' tale of an illicit romance doomed from the outset because the star-crossed lovers are foolish enough to chase their passions across class boundaries. Filmed in spectacular Raman palaces, *Camille* 2000 is



centred on the bedroom gymnastics of "Marguerite" (Danielle Gouber), a slinky temptress who can afford to maintain her exalted position among Rame's elite decadents only because she encourages and accepts the lecherous kindness and lavish gifts of an ancient but amorous count. Sex is a lucrative hobby for Marguerite, and even contracting a mysterious fatal ailment cannot curb her profitable appetite for sensual excess. She launches headlong into a whirl of drape, booze and intransigent sluttiness. Though actual nudity is slight by porn standards, Metzger treats the entranced audience to exquisite, extended meditations upon Gouber's classically languid form. Kink aficionados will pop their corks during the champagne-fuelled fetish-thrills hi-jinks that occur during a dress-up bondage party thrown in a baroche that has been fashioned from an old prison. Prospective lovers spend a getting-acquainted period



while chained together, then sink off to private calls to seal the deal. Being sentenced to the inescapable world of *Camille* 2000 is fitting punishment for the crime of succumbing to grand passion.

THE LICKERISH QUARTET (1970)

Is it coincidence or artistic circumstance when a rich and listless Italian family of three happen upon the lead actress from a smut film that they have just viewed? If reality is dictated by Radley Metzger, Mum, Dad, and Mum's libidinally erupting son persuade the stock and rapacious blonde to accompany them back to their countryside villa for an orgy of existential and surreal seduction. What is real? What is imagined? Where is the line that joins memory and fantasy? Why is it that all the deep places of the psyche are drenched with the imagery of skin sliding on skin? Considered by discriminating cineastes to be Metzger's masterpiece, *The Lickerish Quartet* is deliberately mind-blowing and intends to penetrate the viewer's head space as deeply as it does the seat of desire. Indeed, the point of this exercise in high-class, dissociative erotica may be that the origin and destination of all lust sits squarely between our ears. Again, expect the eye candy to be more implicit than explicit, but with enough sugar-coated visuals to satisfy the most demanding appetite for fleshly sweets.

SCORE (1972)

In what might alternately have been called *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf's Pussy?*, a sophisticated couple with an open but contentious marriage prey on the insecurities and taboo desires of an earnest, naive and troubled pair of young lovers. Unlike the Edward Albee psychodrama as prepared for the screen by Mike Nichols in 1966, every performer in *Score* deserves to be seen getting laid, and is seen getting laid, and the characters also all live happily ever after. And why not? Stifling inhibitions and outmoded gender roles have been overcome. The life-affirming sexual energy has been unleashed. Men and women have



with the hollowed core befitting the lives of the saints, but unlike this movie with its quick and funky chopped-in shots of genitals, I will actually suck cock long and lovingly and even do anal in my film. Although you, as the teenaged Madonna, made this vow in all sincerity, you unfortunately changed your mind. When your chance came to portray the morally compromised wife of a South American potentate, you substituted singing for sex; so *Little Mother* remains a superior big- or small-screen delight than *Evita* (1997) in every way that matters.

high-gloss S&M, particularly that portion of it populated by fashion model quality femmes, is an area of study that deserves the knowing lens work and psychosexual insight of Radley Metzger. Extrapolated from Frenchwoman Catherine Robbe-Grillet's novel *L'Image* (1956), this exploration of semi-consensual sex and worshipful humiliation is staged in the luxurious drawing rooms and bedrooms that are a hallmark of Metzger's settings. Also typical of the master, Jean is fully satisfied by the production's end. Not only does the sinistraly alluring Claire shore Anne with him, she shores herself as well. Plot points couldn't have favoured Jean more if he'd written the story himself.

THE IMAGE a/k/a THE PUNISHMENT OF ANNE (1975)

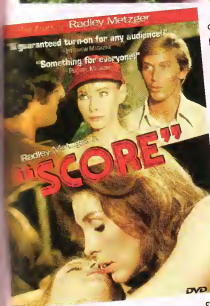
Kids: learn from the example of writer "Jean," the male hero of *The Image*, or as it is alternately called, *The Punishment of Anne*. Stay in school and master your grammar and one day you too may live on adventure like that of scholarly Jean when he is reacquainted with "Claire," an overtly sexual mystery woman who has frolicked about in Jean's subconscious in all the years that have intervened since their first meeting. Perhaps Jean minored in psychology. He is a keen student of human behaviour, and soon divines that Claire commands her own personal sex slave, the demure and delightful "Anne." The underworld of

of those dudes does. To counteract the gay content, the two women engage in a gorgeous bout lesbian groppling, underscoring Metzger's understanding that two women having sex with one another is a doubly heterosexual experience.

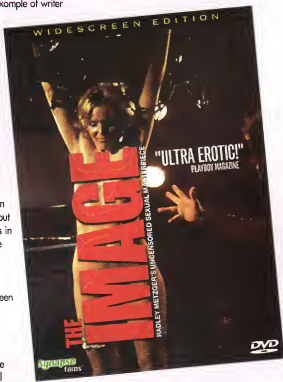
LITTLE MOTHER (1973)

Pretend that you were the teenaged Madonna. On a dare, and because you are bored and adventurous, you have ditched high school slunk off to a slightly stinky, declining movie palace in the urban centre of Detroit. Surrounded by ropt, semi-ponting aficionadas of film as art, you, the teenaged Madonna, take in a viewing of Radley Metzger's *Little Mother*. A powerful stream of thought rushes through your head:

Someday, you think, I will become a fabulous cinema icon on a par with the exotic, severe glamour puss who is Christiane Kruger, and I too will play the ruthless, sexually manipulative wife of a president of a South American country, and my director will light my body so I appear to be emerging from a cocoon of heavenly light, and every illicit detail of my character's whorish post will be presented



been presented naked more often than in any Metzger feature that was not rated XXX. And this elevating honky-panky and campy repertage all take place in the anamorphic pre-war seaside charm of Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Homophobes be alert! Avert your gozes, or else pretend that one of the two dudes playing couch ball is actually a chick, which is exactly what one



BEYOND THE LIVING DEAD

Cult director Lucio Fulci is best known for movies like *Zombie Flesh-Eaters* and *The Beyond*, but his long career also encompassed gory movies in other genres too, many of which are now finding their way to DVD. John Martin investigates...



The new Blue Underground disc of Lucio Fulci's *Conquest*, and - if they ever get round to releasing it - Shriek Show's much-postponed special edition of his *Lizard In A Woman's Skin* should scotch forever the myth (propagated by those who used to know better) that Fulci was a zombie-specialising hack who fluked a couple of good pictures. This version of events, one worthy of the contempt of anyone who knows anything about Italian horror cinema, is instantly discredited by a cursory look at the impressive non-zombie entries on Fulci's lengthy filmography.

The viciously commercial dictates of the Italian scene in its heyday hardly provided fertile soil for the auteurist approach, but it's fascinating to see how recurring themes and scenes were refined and developed over the course of the entire Fulci oeuvre, an overview you just can't get by restricting your attention to his zombie, or indeed horror films, alone.

Witness, for example, how *The Beyond*'s celebrated chain whipping prologue was anticipated by the lynching

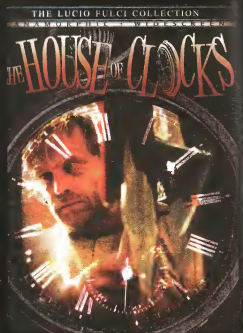
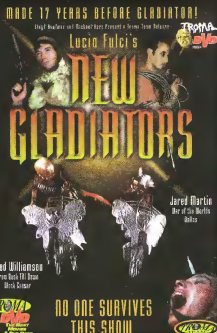
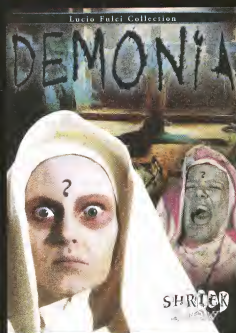
of Florinda Balkan in *Don't Torture A Duckling* (1972), and can ultimately be traced right back to Fulci's savage 1966 western *Colt Concert/Massacre Time*. His 1975 oater *Four Of The Apocalypse* is even more brutal, pitting Fabio Testi and his drifter pals against Mansonesque Mexican Tamas Millan and throwing in a spot of incidental cannibalism for good measure. Recently it was discovered that another tough western, Julio Buchs' *A Bullet For Sandoval* (1970), was co-directed by Fulci. Before shooting to international notoriety with those zombie flicks during the original "video nasties" ponc of the early

'80s, our hero had already amassed 33 directing (and 130 screen writing) credits, which makes it kind of ironic that some genre critics treated him as a "new face on the scene" after *Zombie Flesh-Eaters*. Not only westerns, but sexploillers, sagas of juvenile delinquency, documentaries and even TV pop music programmes, all had been grist to our main man's mill in a 30 year career, but the younger Fulci was particularly noted as a director of comedies, in which incarnation he worked with the likes of Tata, Stefano "Steno" Vanzina, Alberto Sordi, and Barbara Steele (*The Moniacs*, 1967), as well as the

lovely Edwige Fenech in the *La Pretora/The Judge* (1976). Another Fulci comedy, 1968's *Operation St Peter*, starred Edward G. Robinson in the Hollywood legend's final screen appearance, though more typical were Fulci's vehicles for Franco and Ciccio (Italy's answer to Cannon and Ball, or - as their own publicity so candidly put it - "the two idiots") in such sensitive, understated affairs as *How We Stole The Atomic Bomb* and (get this for a prophetic title!) *A Poke In The Eye, Italian Style*.

But Fulci's true inclination was always towards the fantastique, and his career's inexorable progression into our favourite field was marked by a succession of increasingly florid titles: *One On Top Of Another* aka *Perversion Story* (1968), *Lizard In A Woman's Skin* (1971), and, yes, *Don't Torture A Duckling* (1972).

The first of these films stars Jean Sorel, Elsa Martinelli and Marisa Mell (taking on two roles) in a clever fusion of Hitchcock's



LUCIO FULCI COLLECTION
ANAMORPHIC • WIDESCREEN

LIZARD in a WOMAN'S SKIN

This effects sequence (cut from the British release) was masterminded by a characteristically uncredited Mario Bava and Carlo Rambaldi, so convincingly that Fulci (ironically a great animal lover) was only saved from a two-year jail sentence for cruelty to animals when Rambaldi produced one of the prop dogs used for it!

By The Cemetery) and the pre-John Carpenter's Thing disembowelment of several dogs.

This effects sequence (cut from the British release) was masterminded by a characteristically uncredited Mario Bava and Carlo Rambaldi, so convincingly that Fulci (ironically a great animal lover) was only saved from a two-year jail sentence for cruelty to animals when Rambaldi produced one of the prop dogs used for it.

While we're on the subject of gore (surprisingly enough, in a piece about Lucio Fulci), in the director's 1969 historical drama *Beatrice Cenci* (which he once claimed as his personal favourite among all his films), characters are savaged by dogs and tortured with burning coils. These scenes are missing from the version sometimes broadcast in the early hours of the morning on certain ITV networks, but present and correct in the old Fletcher widescreen video release.

But what convinced Fabrizio De Angelis that Fulci was the man to helm his projected *Down Of The Dead* cash-in *Zombie Flesh-Eaters* (which nearly went to Enzo Castellari instead), were two similar sequences of bones being bashed open on cliffs in *Don't Torture A Duckling* and 1977's *Murder To The Tune Of Seven Black Notes*, aka *The Psychic*. The former, despite being re-released as *Long Night Of Exorcism* to cash in on the international success of William Friedkin's film, is actually a superior, savage giallo in which rural backwardness and superstition homper on investigation into the killings of several adolescent boys.

The scene in which gorgeous Barbara Bouchet (now earning her daily All Bran by advertising laxatives on Italian TV) pricks-teases one youngster caused more controversy in Italy than the closing scene of the killer's skull being crushed as he plummets to his death, a scene echoed in the pre titles sequence (unfortunately

omitted from some prints) of *Seven Black Notes*.

Ironically that brief moment in that film should have secured Fulci the gory zombie gig that sealed his international reputation, because the picture is, on the whole, a text book example of audience manipulation through sheer sustained suspense and atmosphere, as Jennifer O'Neill seeks to make sense of her visions of death, realising too late that the person doomed to be walled up alive is herself.

Poe-like imagery of premature entombment also feature in *The Black Cat* (1981), an endearing oddity which must stand as the looest adaptation ever, even of poor old Edgar Allan, undoubtedly the most loosely adapted author of all time. Gorehounds will enjoy the spectacle of doomed dudes flying through car windscreens or being impaled on railings at the behest of Polrick Magge's malevolent moggy; others will derive perverse enjoyment from the film's confused rendition of English police procedure (David Warbeck and Al Cliver are the boys in blue), a somnambulistic performance from Mimsy Farmer ("that old bitch"), as Warbeck remembered her) and endless close ups of Magee's manic eyeballs as he staggers around misty cemeteries, trying to hold conversations with dead people.

Also sonchwiched in somewhere among Fulci's zombie quartet is *The Naples Connection*, just released by Blue Underground in the most complete edition yet, wherein a perfumed ponce from Marseilles attempts to muscle in on heroic cigarette smuggler Luca (Fabio Testi's) nice little earner, substituting smog for snout. Mafia machinations are manifested in a series of crosses and double crosses until the old dons come out of retirement to put things to rights (Fulci here awards himself the most memorable of his many cameos, toting a mean machine gun in the final routing of the French invaders), but not

Vertigo and Henri Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* which has Sorel sitting in the electric chair waiting to be fried for a murder that never happened. What's going on? Clue: what did I just say about *Vertigo* and Moll's double role? Don't worry, there are further twists aplenty before this engrossing thriller closes.

Lizard In A Woman's Skin (the title derived from a tripping hippy's evidence to

the police) is a fine example of the "Swinging London" giallo sub strain inspired by Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966). In it Fulci continued his gleeful subversion of genre conventions (if all the evidence - including her own confession - points to Florinda Bolkan as the killer, she's gotta be innocent... right?) and took a further big step towards out-and-out horror with scenes including a bot attack (reprised in *House*

FLORINDA
BOLKANBARBARA
BOUCHETTOMAS
MILIANIRENE
PAPAS

Don't Torture A Duckling

"One of Lucio Fulci's
best films and a
superb giallo!"

-Dario Argento

DVD

before a string of graphically gory shootings, bombings, stabbings, enforced skinny dipping in lime pits and the bunsen burning of faces have been rendered with the accustomed level of gut-churning realism by Franco Di Girolami.

For sheer protracted unpleasantness the Bunsen scene takes some beating, but Fulci manages it when Luca is forced to listen to his wife being beaten and sodomised over the phone, a scene that anticipates an even nastier one in the notorious New York Ripper (1982). One can only conclude that Fulci holds some kind of grudge against Daniela Doria (the female answer to John

Marshall), the actress on the receiving end of Ripper's razor attack: her face was gnawed off by rats in **The Black Cat**, a knife was rammed into her skull in **The House By The Cemetery**, and she vomited her guts up (literally) in **City Of The Living Dead**.

Ripper represented a return to the giallo format for Fulci, with all the viciousness of his zombie movies intact. Whereas the unprecedented levels of violence in those films had been tolerated (at least until the "video nasties" campaign was officially whipped up by vested interests) due to their fantastical, non imitative, dreamlike tone, this realistic cop thriller was badly received on account of its perceived misogyny, and all prints thrown out of the country by the BBFC who long regarded it as some kind of index of unacceptable imagery.

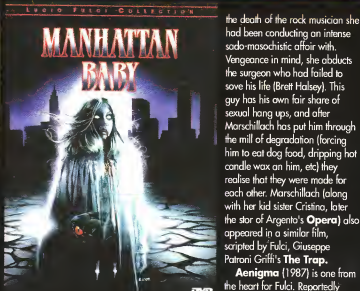
Developing House By The Cemetery's idea of an evil character who uses to age and die, an early treatment by NTR centred on an old man who used as a rejuvenating agent that was both the

modus operandi of his murders and his disguise, an idea subsequently spun off as the basis of Ruggero Deodato's **Off Balance**. Fulci's **Manhattan Baby** (1982) also developed an idea from **House By The Cemetery**, its child characters (through an accidental encounter with Ancient Egyptian ritual magic) gaining access to another dimension which kills any adults who venture into it. Unjustly dismissed by most critics - and Fulci himself - as a pot-boiler, **Manhattan Baby** is a hypnotic, hallucinatory experience, enhanced no end by Fabio Frizzi's marvellous score.

Following his split with the tried and trusted team of Frizzi, writer Dardano Sacchetti, cinematographer Sergio Salvati, FX ace Giannetto De Rossi and producer Fabrizio De Angelis, Fulci's career entered a confused phase, characterised by frantic hopping from genre to genre and the announcement of films that were never made, or which mutated into new projects.

Conquest (1983), a chaotic collision of Carlos Castaneda, comic strip and Replum jellies (featuring a guest appearance by jolly baby-like zombies) was conceived (the due's in the title) to cash in on recent hits **Canan The Barbarian** and **Quest For Fire**. Fulci fails to make his customary cameo appearance in this film, presumably because he felt that he couldn't carry off a laird!

The same year's **Rame 2033: The Fighter Centurians** borrows heavily from Norman Jewison's **Rollerball** in its portrayal of a dystopian future where violent gladiatorial contests are used to pacify the oppressed population, and was



ripped off in its turn of by Paul Michael Gleser's **The Running Man**. Fulci's throwaway musings in this picture on the ethical status of violent spectacle as entertainment would be elaborated on in **The Cat In My Brain**, the film he has dubbed his "blood testament."

Murder Rock (1984) is a return to the giallo, with a dash of added flashdancing to cash in on the contemporary **Kids From Fame** craze. Indeed, Fulci goes so far as to feature a black dance instructor who informs the students that success costs, and right here is where they'll pay in sweat. They've got plenty to sweat about too, because some leonine is stalking dancers and puncturing their hearts with an ornamental hot pin.

The killings are rendered in disappointingly restrained style, testifying to Fulci's assertion that this was "the end of an era... an attempt to find a new way... that old type of horror, so hard and wild, was dead." As if to underscore this point, although much close-up use is made of Olga Karlatos' beautiful eyes, they are at no point gouged out by a **Zombie Flesh-Eaters**.

The Devil's Honey (1986) deals with a girl (Blanca Marschillach) driven mad by

the death of the rock musician she had been conducting an intense sado-masochistic affair with. Vengeance in mind, she abducts the surgeon who had failed to save his life (Brett Halsey). This guy has his own fair share of sexual hang ups, and after Marschillach has put him through the ritual of degradation (forcing him to eat dog food, dripping hot candle wax on him, etc) they realise that they were made for each other. Marschillach (along with her kid sister Cristina, later the star of Argento's **Opera**) also appeared in a similar film, scripted by Fulci, Giuseppe Patroni Griffi's **The Trap**.

Aenigma (1987) is one from the heart for Fulci. Reportedly inspired by his near-death, out of body experiences following major surgery, it deals with the possession of a sexy student by the spirit of her plain Jane classmate, after the latter has been hounded to death by an insensitive prank. Under the influence of this shade, those responsible are killed off by means of transferred telekinetic powers, which involves sequences such as a statue coming to life to crush a girl in a bear hug (Mario Bava's **Venue Of Ills** being the obvious inspiration here), a decapitation by window and a slug attack that's a feeble imitation of the legendary spider onslaught in **The Beyond**.

The opening of **Demanio** (1989) also recalls that masterpiece, with a medieval chapter of heretical Sicilian nuns being crucified and bricked up alive after they are discovered burning the offspring of their satanic orgies. As their spirits possess Meg Register in the present day, Fulci reprises the cat attack from any number of his films, pinches the quartering by tree gag from Deodato's **Cut And Run** (not to mention o Herschell Gordon Lewis type tongue skewering) and awards himself his longest cameo (as a police coroner) so far, anticipating his fully fledged starring role in 1990's **The Cat In My Brain**.

Whereas once Fulci made pop up cameos and the zombies hogged centre

LUCIO FULCI COLLECTION

From the Director of *Zombie*

THE NEW YORK RIPPER



stage, by the time of *TCITB* the position was reversed! This splatwork quilt of a movie comprises old takes from Andrea Bianchi's *Do You Remember Dr. Jekyll?*, Maria Bianchi's *Don't Be Afraid - Aunt Marta Wouldn't Kill You*, Enzo Milioni's *Bloody Moon*, and Leandro Lucchetti's *Bloody Psychia* (which supplied - surprise, surprise - the shower scene). Charged with getting some mileage out of a bunch of unreleased and unreleaseable movie clips, Fulci characteristically transformed the proceedings into a personal statement, a kind of gory 8 1/2, by taking on the lead role in an audacious linking device. Driven to the verge of a nervous breakdown by the violent content of his own movies, his life invaded by hallucinations of death and mutilation, Fulci (playing Fulci) goes into therapy with a psychiatrist who convinces our hero, by means of hypnosis, that he is responsible for the therapist's own serial slayings. Those who thought Fulci no longer capable of gory outrages received a poke in the eye in the shape of unspooling intestines, chainsawed limbs and amputated heads, sizzling away on microwave carousels.

The film also includes generous slices from an earlier, unreleased Fulci brace, *The Ghosts Of Sodam* (a modest effort concerning yet more possession by the spirits of the dead, sadistic Nazis in this case) and *When Alice Broke The*

Looking Glass (an unsuitable "psychological study" of a Bluebeard style serial killer, portrayed by Brett Halsey) both lensed in 1988. In that same year Fulci had begun work on *Zombi 3*, only to relinquish the director's seat to Bruno Mattei, and he was also suing the producers of *The Red Manks* for trying to pass that one off as one of his movies. Round about this time he also made two uneven TV movies, *Sweet House Of Horrors* (a lame, way-too-late rip-off of *Beetlejuice*) and *The House Of Clocks* (which resembles a gored-up *Twilight Zone* episode), both of which were deemed too bloody to be broadcast on Italian television.

1990's *Voices From Beyond*, which Fulci dedicated to "my great friend Clive Barker," is an intriguing combination of *Hamlet*, dynastic soap opera, whodunit and gore as Korina Huff unravels the mystery of her father's murder (Fulci treats us to several visits to the old boy's coffin, where his putrefying cadaver is crying out for justice). *Door To Silence* (1992) recalls *Carnival Of Souls* and *Jacob's Ladder*, with John Savage trying to work out what the hell is happening to him after "a brush with" death. As well as handing our horror hero the unlikely pseudonym of H Simon Kitay, producer Joe D'Amato reportedly angered Fulci by re-cutting and re-shooting much of the picture. Whatever,



like several of Fulci's later efforts, it remains unreleased on these shores.

Fulci's final years, which coincided with the collapse of the Italian film industry, saw his career on the skids, but only fools would persist in denying what he had achieved in kinder times. Giallo god Dario Argento, who was writing *Wax Mask* with Fulci at the time of the latter's tragically premature demise in March 1996, immediately went on the record expressing his admiration for Fulci's contributions to the Italian thriller. Further afield, if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, imagine how flattered Fulci must have felt by Paul Michael Glaser's black busting Annie vehicle *The Running Man*, which owes so much to Fulci's *Rome 2033: The Fighter Centurions*.

DVD Availability:

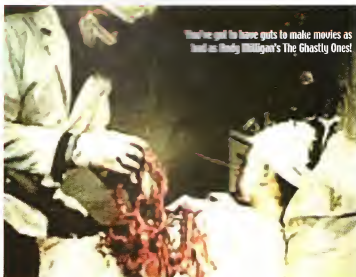
Conquest is out on Blue Underground (Region 1). The Blue Underground release of *Naples Connection* (as *Contrabond*) restores subliminal splatter trims that were made to Italian Shock's R0 release (as The

Smuggler). Shriek Show's oft-postponed R1 special edition of *Lizard In A Woman's Skin* remains one of the most avidly-awaited releases for Italian horror buffs. Their *Demanio* disc is still available. Keep your eyes peeled for DVD-R releases of *One On Top Of Another* (DVD Mondo) and *The Psychic* (Demented Discs). *Don't Torture A Duckling* and *Four Of The Apocalypse* are available on Anchor Bay R1, ditto *Monhottan Baby* and *The New York Ripper*, which can be purchased singly or as a double set. All of the AB releases are nicely packaged, generally coming with trailers and interviews. Their *Black Cat* looks as good as the Salvation (R2) and EC (R0) releases, but both of those feature footage of Fulci at the Everyman Cinema in Hampstead... who's that thrusting young journo at the side of the stage? He should go far (as far as possible - Ed). Troma's R0 edition of *Fighter Centurions* (released as *New Gladiators*) features a poor, full-screen transfer. *Murder Rock* was briefly available as an expensive Japanese import. While *The Devil's Honey* remains in DVD limbo, watch out for a (Hong Kong?) VCD release on the Starry Video Entertainment label. *Anigma* is available from Screen Entertainment (R2) or Image Entertainment (R1). Image also released *Voices From Beyond*. Their *Cot In The Brain* is reportedly becoming hard to get. *Zombie 3* is available over here as *Zombie Flesh Eaters 2* on VHS, or under its original title on Shriek Show, some of whose discs feature a restored pre-titles sequence while others don't. VHSO and Shriek Show are also responsible for the respective R2 and R1 releases of Fulci's *House Of...* brace. DWV's region free release of *Mossoco Time* is getting pretty rare. VQ has released *A Bullet For Sandoval* on R1. •

Andy Milligan

the Gore Score

A low budget legend, Andy Milligan's films are among the worst ever made – and wait till you see how rotten his life was too!



You're got to have guts to make movies as bad as Andy Milligan's *The Ghastly Ones!*

The Madness of MILLIGAN!

The 1960s opened the floodgates for all manner of cinematic sleaze. Subjects hitherto found only in the brains of maladjusted sixteen-year-old boys, psychotic janitors, and quietly demented businessmen could be projected onto America's grindhouse screens with only occasional fear of legal reprisal. The genres (exploitation, sexploitation, nudies, roughies) even spawned a few superstar directors, with

recognition coming sometimes early (Russ Meyer) and sometimes later (Herschel Gordon Lewis, Doris Wishman). For a few sleazier souls, acceptance, not to mention fame, remains elusive, even among many aficionados of trashy movies. The late gay auteur Andy Milligan, who wore every possible hat on his no-budget films, is a prime example.

Milligan was raised in a dysfunctional household that thrived on abuse,

physical, sexual, and psychological. Born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1929, he escaped the clutches of a military father and an unhinged alcoholic mother to try his luck first at acting, then puppeteering. He worked in early live TV and eventually moved to New York, where his skill as a dressmaker won him acclaim. Milligan's interest in theatre grew in the hothouse of the Big Apple, and by 1960 he was associated with the pioneering Caffé Cino, a pre-La Mama experimental theatre group-cum-commune made up of evil queens, fog hogs, hustlers, and hangers-on.

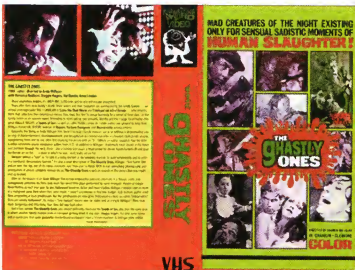
Milligan's theatrical efforts were outré even by Cino's loose standards. His biographer Jimmy McDonough, in *The Ghastly Ones: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan* (A Capella, 2001) describes in brilliant detail how his threadbare productions of works like Lord Dunsany's *The Glittering Gates* or Gene's *The Maids* became too-real exercises in sadomasochism, with Milligan demanding that actual violence be substituted for the fantasy kind called for in the script. This approach, not surprisingly, terrified the actors (who nevertheless typically kept coming back for more) and repelled some audiences

(ditto), but pushed rough realism in off- and off-off-Broadway plays to levels unseen outside private dungeons and heartland meth labs at night.

During this period, Milligan also exhibited a brand of vitriolic camp in his incarnation as a cauterizer. He opened a dress shop called the Ad Lib where, according to McDonough, 'Minette, an ageless, sparrow like drag queen, worked as "stitch bitch" while Milligan threw fat women out of the store and argued with everyone else.'

'Andy never wanted to sell his clothes,' said employee Jo Ann Proccocio. 'He'd get upset if they wanted to buy them. He used to jump up and down.' 'Dammit! That bitch bought my dress!' Milligan obviously didn't care what his customers thought of him, and in between throwing temper tantrums in his shop he spent a lot of time trawling for anonymous sex and exercising his serious sadistic impulses in scenarios documented in creepy detail by McDonough (the participants weren't always willing).

Then when the Caffé Cino scene imploded from drugs and violence, he continued working in low-budget theatricals, often writing, producing, directing, and dressing these threadbare plays. By 1965, he made his first film, the feature *Vapors*. Set in New York's St. Mark's bathhouse, *Vapors* offers a fascinating pre-*Stonewall* glimpse of the gay bathhouse sex scene. Shot in black-and-white with Milligan's typical jittery camerawork, the film is an encounter between two men, one gay and one possibly straight or a closet case. A Greek chorus of catty queens wanders in and out of the scenes, sometimes dishing the dirt, sometimes explaining the rapes to new arrivals. There's a creepy, real-time air to the proceedings reminiscent of Warhol's early work. A cock in close-up got *Vapors* censored, but the film played at legendary New York queer cinemas. One of the stars of *Vapors*, Gerry Jaccuzzo, became part of Milligan's stock company,





Milligan obviously didn't care what his customers thought of him, and in between throwing temper tantrums in his shop he spent a lot of time trawling for anonymous sex and exercising his serious sadistic impulses in scenarios documented in creepy detail by McDonough (the participants weren't always willing).

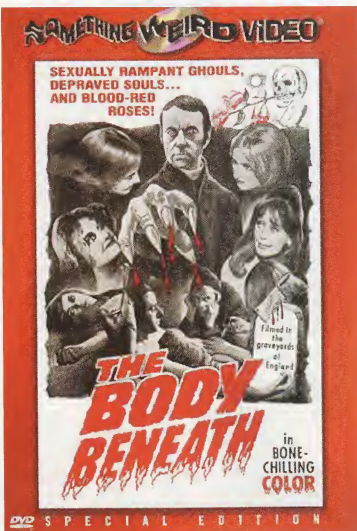
a group of amateurish but tenacious actors who stayed with the director for many of his 29 films despite frequent abuses mental and physical. Less hardy talents often fled mid-production. Jacuzzi plays the queery Duke of Norwich in *Torture Dungeon* (1970), and recalls that the actor who played Ivon the horny gay hunchback vanished after a scene in which he was "pummeled, whipped, and painted" - apparently a little too realistically.

Torture Dungeon is a cut-rate tale of Shakespearean intrigue shot "on the beaches of Staten Island" doubling for medieval England. McDonough's biography amusingly recounts the problems with this production, which ranged from talentless townspeople corralled into acting ("dese, dem, and dese being the typical 'medieval' potais they could manage") to an actress trying

to crush Milligan with her horse after one too many takes.

Compsters will appreciate the film's polysexuality: the Duke says, "I'm not a homosexual, I'm not a heterosexual, I'm not ossexual, I'm trisexual... I'll try anything... for pleasure!" This includes humping the ill-fated hunchback on the Duke's wedding night. Gore fans will admire *Torture Dungeon's* pitchforks to the chest and close-up beheadings, while few could fail to applaud Hol Borske's portrayal of a retarded prince who mindlessly picks his nose.

Milligan's work — which includes such titles as *Fleshpat on 42nd St*, *Bloodthirsty Butchers*, *Guru*, *The Mad Monk* and *The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!* - has been written off in most quarters as both too unpleasant and too incompetent to merit attention. But



Milligan, who died of AIDS in 1991, has an undeniable style, a dark energy partly derived from his trademark nervous handheld camera and partly from an approach to narrative that's practically entropic. His nihilistic worldview is brooding in its unadorned cruelty, ragged acting, and persistent, troubling air of sheer strangeness. This is personal cinema from the brackish backwaters of pre-Disneyfied Times Square, rendering a grim, trashy world far from the safety and salace of the multiplex. •

ANDY ON DVD!

Something Weird has announced an upcoming release of a double feature DVD of *The Ghastly Ones* and *Seeds of Sin* (Milligan's magnum opus). Originally scheduled for November, it appears to have been delayed, but expect the usual high SW quality nonetheless.

There are also two double feature DVDs from someone called Video Kart. The name doesn't exactly inspire confidence but by the time you read these words they should have released *Bloodthirsty Butchers* and *The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!* on one disc, and *Monstrosity* and *Grave Robbers* on another. They'll probably look terrible, but they'll be very cheap - around ten dollars each! Already out are *Guru*, *The Mad Monk* from *Retromedia* and *The Body Beneath* (with added short, *Vapors*) from *Something Weird*.

mondo movie Massacre!



ENGLISH VERSION

AFRICA ADDIO

a film by
Gualtiero Jacopetti
Franco Prosperi

THE MONDO CANE COLLECTION

True-life is often more terrifying than fiction - especially in the twisted world of Mondo Movies. DVD World checks out The Mondo Cane Collection!

"A forbidden world revealed by hidden cameras! See every conceivable, brutal torture known to man, civilised or savage...! All true, all real, an incredible array of sights and sounds actually filmed in the dark corners of this sick world!"

So goes the hype for the most reviled genre of them all: the **Mondo** movie, bastard offspring of the National Geographic documentary, part peepshow, part geek show, part freak show - all parts a cinematic sideshow. You either love them, gleefully forcing yourself to watch the horrendous commentaries of real close-up dismemberment, paint blank assassinations and surgical operations, just to prove you can stomach anything. Or you hate them, condemning their cynically disguised 'real' social relevance as disgusting exploitation of the worst kind.

They've been around for one hundred years now. The first known short ones were Thomas Edison's **An Execution By Hanging** and **The Electrocution Of An Elephant**. But it wasn't until Ingagi (1930), featuring human sacrifice to a gorilla God, that showmen realised the box office potential in depicting

BLU
UNDERGROUND

DVD

Mondo Cane remains the yardstick though, the daddy of them all, and the notorious title that became synonymous with true life sleaze. Now you can see what all the fuss was about, because the film has been remastered as part of this amazing limited edition (of 10,000!) set that will soon be the stuff of legend - and e-Bay auctions!

bizarre rituals featuring topless native women. **Wild Rapture** (1950), capturing the Ubongo tribe self-mutilating their lips, and **Karamoja** (1954), revealing animal blood drinking rites, pushed the boundaries of what was deemed acceptable in "documentary" terms to new extremes.

Then came **Mondo Cane** (1962), the centrepiece of Blue Underground's incredible new 8-disc **Mondo** box set. This was the film that redefined the formula, mixing restaged sex, drugs and schlock 'n' roll acts with offensive bought-in newsreel footage from the far-flung corners of the globe, and named a whole sub-genre in the process. It was a monster success, and the bloodgates opened as each new title tried to out-Mondo the original by plumbing the shockumentary depths for high nausea effect.

Mondo Cane remains the yardstick though, the daddy of them all, and the notorious title that became synonymous with true life sleaze. Now you can see what all the fuss was about, because the film has been remastered as part of this amazing limited edition (of 10,000!) set that will soon be the stuff of legend - and e-Bay auctions!

Mondo Cane was created by Italian journalist Gualtiero Jacopetti and documentary filmmaker Franco Proserpi (once an assistant to Maria Bava). These guys have been called pioneers and geniuses, criminals and charlatons. For more than four decades their movies have been banned all over the world, but **The Mondo Cane Collection** presents every one of the still-shocking films of Proserpi and Jacopetti, a gruelling body of work that has influenced everything from broadcast news to "reality TV" - and changed the face of cinema forever.

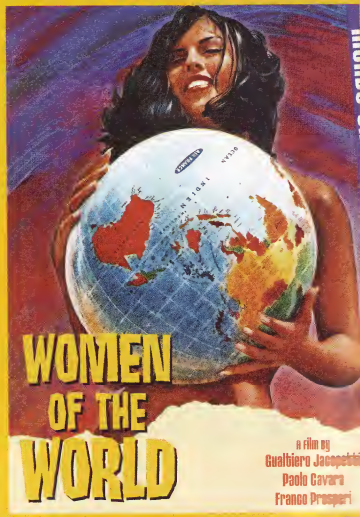
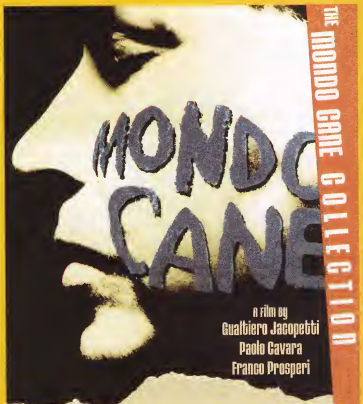
Mondo Cane presents scenes of primitive rituals as practiced in remote parts of the world to titillate thrill-seeking middle class audiences, all to the tune of Ritz Ortolani's lush, Oscar-nominated theme music. Though **Mondo** is the Italian world for life, the title translates as **It's A Dog's Life**.

The movie contrasts scenes of a pet cemetery in Hollywood with live dogs being killed and cooked in a restaurant in Tai Pei. Bulls are beheaded in Portugal, and Malaysian fishermen sadistically kill a shark by shoving a spiny sea urchin down its throat - the cruelty supposedly being justified by graphic pictures of the shark's mutilated victims. We see Swiss artist Yves Klein using nude women as paintbrushes, and cherubic Italian kids polishing the bones of plague victims in Roman catacombs. Though probably quite mild by today's standards, **Mondo Cane** is undeniably well made and throws up a diversity of memorable images.

Blue Underground's box set also includes the inevitable **Mondo Cane 2**, filmed a year later. Though not as well made as the original, this hastily constructed sequel was still quite a box office hit. The problem here is that many of the so-called "authentic" scenes are quite obviously staged for the camera - a "cheat" that would plague most **Mondo** movies from here on.

Mondo Cane 2 strings together all sorts of oddities, including a sequence on Italian transvestites which segues into an item on Italian police dressing up as women to snare muggers. Hungry Mexicans scoff insects in tortilla sauce, wiping crushed mondibles off their chins. A coke made in the image of a decayed corpse is eaten in celebration for the Mexican Festival of the Dead. We see an eccentric artist who uses naked women to spit point on canvases, and another artistic chap of dubious sanity dresses as a minotaur while he points his version of Dante's Inferno. The most famous bit of footage shows a Buddhist monk burning himself to death as a protest against the Vietnam war. It's all a bit of a mish-mosh, but sensation-seekers will find enough to amuse and sometimes shock them.

The Mondo Cane Collection also includes two different discs of **Africa Addio**, made in 1966. One of the most gut-wrenchingly disturbing **Mondo** movies ever made, this gives us a chilling, unwavering look at the bloody turmoil of revolutionary Africa in the 60s.



MONDO CANE

(ESTE PERRO MUNDO)

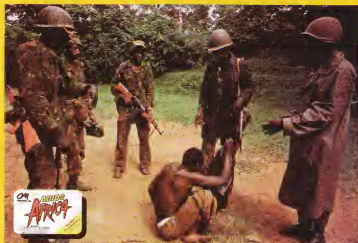
ANTONIA EN
VERSION INTEGRAL

UN FILM REALIZZATO PER:
GUALTIERO JACOPETTI
PAOLO CAVARA
FRANCO PROSPERI

FOTOGRAFIA:
ANTONIO CLIMATI
BENITO FRATTARI

MUSICA DE:
NIÑO OLIVERIO
RIZ ORTOLANI

TECHNICOLOR



The bodies pile up in Africa Addio, and the rebel soldier above is about to be executed on camera!

The *Mondo Cane* filmmaking team had gone there to examine the end of colonial rule on the dark continent, but their film changed course after large

scale violence erupted. Without colonial rule, everything was suddenly up for grabs at the hands of revolutionaries, mercenaries and poachers - and Jacopetti and Prosperi were right there to capture the resultant carnage!

Many *Mondo* flicks mix real and faked footage, but there's none of that here. You can tell that everything you're seeing really happened, from the brutal slaughter of herds of animals to the many scenes of young blacks being cut to pieces by firing squads. The sheer nonchalance of the people doing the killing chills you to the bone, almost as much as the horrific images of literally hundreds of Arab corpses strewn across a beach as far as the eye can see!

Apparently Jacopetti and his crew were the only outsiders with the nerve to venture into war-torn Dar Es Salaam and Rwanda to film the slaughter of African rebels by mercenaries, and the footage of this is particularly hard to watch.

Attempting to film one firing squad too many, Jacopetti and his men are hauled out of their car and thrown up against a bullet-scorched wall. But their lives are saved when a mercenary officer spots their Italian passports. At the time of the film's original release, twenty African embassies protested at its portrayal of their civil war, but *Africa Addio's* grim subject matter was just too much for mainstream audiences and the movie proved to be much less popular at the box office than *Mondo Cane*. It was later re-edited into *Africa, Blood And Guts*, which played UK cinemas. This version was missing a good half hour of footage which explained the history of the conflict, and needless to say a lot of

the gory stuff was gone too.

It's all back in there, though, and more in the extended Director's Cut in the Blue Underground set. Morbid gorehounds are certainly not short-changed here, with such repulsive "highlights" as images of stacks of severed hands cut from Wotusi genocide victims, scenes of rotting corpses stacked up in Moslem cemeteries, and an endless parade of animals being viciously slaughtered in the name of "sport." You keep wondering Jacopetti and his team to step in and stop it happening, but of course they are just there to observe, and make wry comments. At one point the cops march a man off to jail or, more likely, a shallow grave as he protests wildly over a disembowelled body. Jacopetti's narration reveals: "This tribesman can't understand why there is such a problem over his eating a corpse's liver..."

Formed Hollywood director Elia Kazan said that he was very impressed and moved by the film, but most critics were just repulsed by it. There's no doubt that it easily justifies its reputation as "an orgy of sadism and racism." Seen almost four decades on, the images here still have the power to haunt the mind, and it would be comforting to think it could never happen again. But then you turn on the nightly news and realise that stuff like this is still going on every day somewhere in this wide, wonderful world of ours. So this is one case where you can't just keep repeating to yourself, "It's only a movie... It's only a movie..."

Also in *The Mondo Cane*

Collection are two different versions of Jacopetti and Prosperi's *Goodbye Uncle Tom*, a documentary in which a camera crew travels back in time to document the American slave trade (with a combination of historical fidelity and gratuitous nudity). We hadn't had a chance to see this at time of writing, but all reports suggest it is not as gruelling as some of their work, though it does apparently have some pretty nasty depictions of the violence perpetrated against blacks throughout American history.

Then there's *Women Of The World*, aka *La Donna Del Mondo*, a black and white documentary hastily assembled by Prosperi and Jacopetti from leftover footage from *Mondo Cane*. Purportedly a documentary about the role of women in worldwide society, the emphasis on sexploitation is even more pronounced than in *Cane*. We get treated to an exploitive tour of Parisian night clubs and the notorious Reeperbahn red light district in Hamburg, some graphic footage of Hong Kong hookers, tapless Tahitian dancers, nudists, lesbians, eye surgery and breast injections. We also get depressing scenes of Israeli Army women who have given birth to Tholidomide kids, and a gory plastic surgery operation. One interesting scene



shows that female vanity is the same the world over - it contrasts shots of Bedouin women undergoing camel poo facials, contrasted with medical footage of wealthy European matrons suffering the painful removal of their outer layer of facial skin in the hope that the new skin will be wrinkle-free!

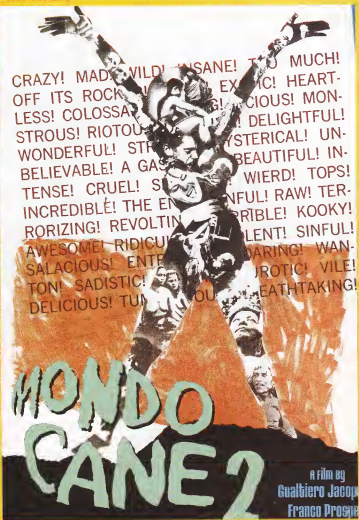
Judith Crist, a vociferous critic of *Mondo* flicks, called it, "basically a nudie in pretentious disguise." The often sarcastic narration is provided by Peter Ustinov, and Crist noted: "It scarcely rises to the level of a *Playboy* caption in its catering to the Peeping Tom sophistication of schoolboys."

The *Mondo Cone Collection* is rounded off with a fascinating documentary entitled *The Godfathers Of Mondo*, featuring in-depth interviews with the filmmakers and other participants. They answer, among other things, questions about whether or not they ever "faked" scenes for dramatic effect. "I get very angry when I am accused of that," says Jacopetti. "When you film reality, say a war, you can't go into all the ins and outs. If I missed a detail I would go back and film a close-up or something to help link the images. You need to have those bits to tell the story. But I can swear by the truth of what I'm showing you."

Some researchers still dispute the veracity of certain incidents in *Africa Addio*, but there are undoubtedly some authentic on-screen deaths in the film. Jacopetti was even accused of colluding with mercenary killers in Congo, and "directing" executions for the benefit of his cameras. He was finally forced to go back to Africa and collect testimonies to clear his name in court.

When *Women of the World* failed to make any money at the box office, Jacopetti and Prosperi returned to conventional journalism. But their legacy lives on, and other mondo directors continued to mine the third world for shockumentary material. The Hong Kong-produced *Shocking Asia* series, which brought sex-change operations to the mondo table, was relatively successful in the mid-70s and 80s, and *Foces of Death*, assembled in 1978 by director John Alan Schwartz, charted the course for mondo in the 1980s.

Presented by "Dr Frances B Gross", the film is a macabre compilation of newsreel atrocities, surgical and autopsy footage, animal cruelty and faked horror scenes. Many of the latter were convincing enough to be considered genuine at the time, thus fuelling the enduring urban myth of the "snuff" movie, where people were killed purely



for the cameras. But it looks pretty tame these days, tame enough to now be getting a legitimate DVD release in the UK. It's not surprising really. These days *Mondo* has been absorbed into the mainstream. We live in an age when you're never too far away from a camcorder, and the late night satellite schedules are filled with such shows as *Cops* and *When Stunts Go Wrong*. Sensationalism dressed as public information is alive and well, and like it or not it's here to stay. ●

Above: Weird rituals from *Goodbye Uncle Tom*. Well, you've got to find stuff to keep you amused when you've got no telly!

Norman's NIGHT MARES!



As Anchor Bay release a coffin-shaped box set of horror DVDs by cult filmmaker Norman J Warren, we track down the man himself for an exclusive interview. John Martin asks the questions.

T

he release of Anchor Bay's DVD boxed set (comprising *Satan's Slave*, *Terror*, *Inseminoid* and *Prey*, plus a host of tasty extras) serves as an overdue tribute to the indomitable film-making fervour of Norman J. Warren. *Bloody New Tear* aka *Time Warp Terror* (1987) remains his last completed feature and who knows, under prevailing industry conditions, whether we'll ever see another from him?

This irrepressible and highly agreeable director has kept busy with documentaries, teaching films, commercials and rock videos (e.g. for Gary Numan, Rupert Hine and The Fixx) while trying to put together the financing for two long-standing pet projects, *Beyond Terror* and a remake of that seminal evil brain movie, *Fleat Without A Face*.

A prophet without much honour in his own country, Norman would no doubt find British horror buffs falling over themselves to heap praise upon the string of low budget exploiters he has managed to make, had he been American born.

Above left: A cannibal alien noshes on human flesh in Norman J. Warren's *Prey*.

Right: The sorry results of attempting the old blindfolded knife-throwing act after drinking five pints of Fasters are displayed in this scene from *Terror*...



JM: Did you ever think of shipping out to Hollywood and trying your luck there?

NJW: Yes, I didn't actually make a positive move to do it at any time, but I was in America seven or eight years ago, at a time when some opportunities almost presented themselves. One of the highlights of my time over there was that I had the opportunity of meeting with Roger Corman, I spent some time with him, talking about movies, and was amazed, not to mention flattered, to learn that he knew all my films, and had in fact seen most of them. I got the impression that if I had had a script ready at the time, there would have been a very good chance of making a movie with him. This would have been a dream come true, as Corman has always been one of my idols. Ultimately though, nothing positive happened and I decided to come back to England and try and do it here, though if the opportunity of work in America were ever to present itself I would certainly go. I'd love to work in the States.

Was it the case that you and Pete Walker used to be very aware of each other, each checking out what the other was doing?

The answer to that is probably yes. We were aware of each other, and did meet occasionally. Obviously I was interested in what he was doing, and I know that the reverse was also true. We had a link through writer David McGillivray, who did a number of scripts for Pete.

Always remove your head before slamming the window shut, another lesson painfully learned in Terror.

Right: Norman on work directing Inseminoid, and as he is today on the Anchor Bay box set DVD extras!

The opening to your *Satan's Slave* (1976), with the Tarot cards, is very similar to that of Walker's *Frightmare*, which McGillivray also wrote...

Yes, but in fact there is no coincidence, because the idea of the Tarot cards came from the art director, Hayden Pierce, who also did the titles. So that's just one of those strange links. Hayden is the co-writer and would-be co-producer of a lot of the stuff that I've been trying to develop, which is an example of that old 'Why don't we just try and do it ourselves?' attitude.

What was McGillivray like to work with?

Very good indeed, because he doesn't get offended when you want to make changes. A lot of writers feel that their work is set in gold and they don't want any changes, but David... (laughs) Maybe he's just been very lenient with me, but he's never had any complaints when I've thrown out lines or changed scenes around completely.

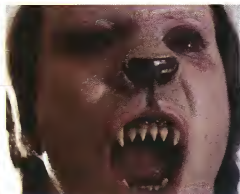
You had a kind of false start in your directing career in that you made two sex movies... In his book about British sex films, *Doing Rude Things*, McGillivray says that you didn't like working in that area, and that you had an actress in *Loving Feeling* (1968) who didn't like doing bedroom scenes.

He's got it slightly the wrong way round there. He's quite right about it not being a type of film that I enjoyed doing, although I was grateful for the first one because it gave me a start. But it wasn't something I felt comfortable doing, and also I found it very restricting. So after the second one, although I was





Right: Sally Faulkner has chosen maybe not the wisest place to hide from the cannibalistic outer-space invader who nicked her teddy bear! Some bloody scenes from *Prey*...



offered the chance of doing *The Wife Swappers* - which was eventually done by Derek Ford. I think - I refused and more or less put myself out of work, as far as directing was concerned, for several years, until the opportunity to do *Satan's Slave* came along. The actress David mentioned, Georgina Ward, I don't know what happened to her. She was in another British film made by a female producer, Hazel Adair, who used to write the long running British soap *Crossroads*, and moonlighted as a co-producer of sex films with the wrestling commentator Kent Walton!

But a lot of your horror films have contained pretty frank sex scenes

Yes, when I said I was uncomfortable doing sex films, I didn't mean it was the sex side of it that bothered me. It was the limitations of the story

lines, because they really were just revolving around people taking their clothes off and progressing to endless bed scenes. After a while you run out of things to do with a bed, you now, camera angles and so on. So David didn't quite get that right. David plays a priest in *Satan's Slave* and he has a smaller role in *Terror* (1979), he's a TV reporter in that one.

"Prey (1978) was previously the hardest to find. The American magazine *Midnight Marquee* was going to do a feature on it, which they had to shelve because we couldn't find any stills to illustrate the article with. It's a complete mystery what happened to them, also to all the copies of the video!"

Not really. At the time of *Satan's Slave* that was still a popular theme and I think certainly with that one we fell into the trap of making a film that was incredibly complex, story wise. This gave us problems, because halfway through, we realised it was so complex that it was

actually quite difficult to get through it all and make it understandable.

Do you collect your own movies?

Norman's unique solution to the parking problems facing modern day commuters can be seen in this educational sequence from *Terror*. Ken Livingstone take note. Mind you, they'd also need to employ levitating traffic wardens...

Those two films have very similar story lines, about an ancient evil returning to threaten people in the present day, would it be fair to say that this shows the influence of H P Lovecraft?

I don't go out of my way to, though it will be very nice to have the Anchor Bay box set. It is nice to have them if for nothing else just to be able to sit down for an evening and relive the thing. But often it's not easy to get hold of a copy. *Prey* (1978) was previously the hardest to find. The American magazine *Midnight Marquee* was going to do a feature on it, which they had



In her DVD commentary the actress Judy Geeson (below) says she can't remember doing any nude scenes for *Inseminoid*. Well Judy, here's a bit of a memory jogger for you...



to shelve because we couldn't find any stills to illustrate the article with. It's a complete mystery what happened to them, also to all the copies of the video.

One of the projects that you're been hoping to make is called *Beyond Terror*. Is this a sequel to your 1978 effort *Terror* or something entirely different?

Well, although it's not a sequel to, or a remake of *Terror*, there are certainly a number of elements that I have taken from the first film. The criticism has justifiably been levelled at *Terror* that it has no real storyline. This is because at the time of making that film, my intention was to come up with fast moving fun and not worry too much about the narrative. It still holds up, of course, even without a story! With *Beyond Terror* I feel that I can cover many of the story points that



organisation since Lord Grade died, rang me and said the money had just fallen through. He went to LA to try and raise some more, for *Beyond Terror* and the other projects they had on their roster, but unfortunately there was no luck there either.

"More than one of the *Inseminoid* reviews wondered why there were so many chainsaws in outer space!"

were glossed over in the original film. My main interest is always in entertainment, and *Beyond Terror* would be just as fast moving as the original, but with a better story line and characters.

How close have you come to realising the project?

We almost got *Beyond Terror* off the ground with the Grade Organisation. They liked it very much and said they could come up with seven million dollars, which would have fitted in ideally with our plans. I did some rewrites and so on, then sadly John Hough, who had been running the

lacked the confidence as to whether I could actually write the whole thing from page one. But because it was becoming so hard to find a script, I think it was out of frustration that I finally thought "Well, why not have a go?". Once I got past that dreaded page one, I was OK.

It sounds as though there's a dearth of people writing the kind of stuff that you'd be interested in.

It's not so much the shortage of people writing. The thing is that with the special effects side in particular, people come up with some really wonderful ideas. But of course some things do cost an enormous amount of money to achieve, and that's actually the biggest problem. If people don't really have the experience of knowing how to achieve the effect, they often put in things that are spectacular but totally impractical.

I believe *Inseminoid* (1981) was conceived as a showcase for Nick Maley's special FX...

Yes, and incidentally it was genuinely written by Nick and his wife Gloria before they or anybody else had seen *Alien*. It was the classic situation of being very surprised, when we saw *Alien*, that there was this similarity to the script that we were about to do. But you're right, Nick and Gloria did come up with the original script and obviously they included a number of scenes where he could demonstrate his abilities, which were quite amazing.

The FX in *Inseminoid* are pretty gruesome in places, and that's also the case in several of your other films. Were you surprised that none of your stuff ever turned up on the dreaded "video nasties" list? Did you expect it to?

No, because I've never really seen them as being that nasty, and the reactions to one or two of them have actually quite surprised me, because I didn't think they were as nasty as everybody else said they were. I'm not even too sure what a "video nasty" is. What I can say is that I see a lot of horror films which are rubbish. I don't know if they're the ones that are regarded as "nasties," but they are rubbish, and they just seem to throw a lot of unnecessary gore in. It's basically the fact that they're so badly made that offends me, not what they contain. I can tell you that *Beyond Terror*, for instance, would contain a number of special effects sequences and a fair amount of gore, but the main emphasis would be on creating edge of the seat tension. I have nothing against gore movies, but I do feel it's time that horror movies "moved back into the shadows", so to speak.



Norman never applies just a dollop of ketchup when a battle will do! Here's what happens to a guy who falls from a highrise while under the influence of devil worshippers in Satan's Slave!



More than one of the *Inseminoid* reviews wondered why there were so many chainsaws in outer space.

(laughs) You're quite right, they did! But on the other hand, why shouldn't there be? They were a much more compact model than is available now. In fact it was a real one, a real chainsaw made by Black & Decker, but for some reason they withdrew it from the market.

They must have seen the film! *Inseminoid* is one of those pictures about which one hears rumours that a "harder" version was prepared for the Japanese market. Is there truth in that, or is it just a myth?

It used to be quite a common thing to do that for the Far East, but there was no additional shooting done for *Inseminoid*. It would have been a case of them making no cuts in the film for that market, so Japanese audiences would have seen the film in its entirety, although the cuts that were made over here were minimal anyway. It wasn't cut for its video release, either.

Brent Walker released *Inseminoid* on video in the scoped format, a privilege which at that time was accorded almost exclusively to arthouse movies...

I don't know why, but you're right, it was released in a completely letterboxed version, no frame loss at all. It was also one of the first films to be put out very rapidly on video, very close to its actual theatrical run. As it happened it proved to be very successful for Brent Walker, it was very well on video. Nowadays, since the advent of DVD, everything is released in its original format, which is very pleasing.

Yes, this was an object lesson in why films should be released in their original screen ratios... Do you enjoy shooting your movies in the ultra-widescreen 2.35 format?

Oh very much so, yes. Cinemascope is still my favourite format and now TVs are all wide screen, this means that many more films are made in 'scope.

What's the attitude of somebody like Stephanie Beacham to having appeared in *Inseminoid* now? I ask because people like Joan Collins, after they've moved onto glossy soaps, have been very dismissive of their horror credits.

Yes, I do know what you mean, and that has tended to happen with Stephanie Beacham as well, although I do feel that wouldn't be Stephanie herself, it would probably be her agent. I did notice that all reference to *Inseminoid* had disappeared from her list of credits in certain publications when she was doing *Dynasty*. But it is probably the agents and press representatives that do that. I can't believe that Stephanie herself would.

Are there any actors that you particularly liked working with, or any that you disliked?

Certainly on the likes side, Stephanie, whom we've just mentioned, and on top of the list would be Judy Geeson, who was an absolute dream to work with, in all respects. She was just so enthusiastic and so co-operative and so involved with the whole production. I don't think she had had more than two or three days off in the entire shoot. Even when those days came along she insisted that she come to the studio each day, simply because she didn't want to miss anything that was happening.

Inseminoid was shot in actual caves rather than on a set, wasn't it?

Yes, it was shot in Chiselshurst Caves in Surrey, quite an amazing place really. It's 22 miles of man-made cave complex, an amazing place visually but not the most pleasant of places to work. There were many logistics problems. The first was electricity, which meant that the generators had to be in use all the time. We were three miles from the actual surface, it was very damp down there and very cold, and in fact I think the biggest problem was actually being underground, being right down there for three weeks. Had it been

any longer, I think things would have been very difficult, because people would have started to get a bit edgy, just from the lack of daylight, just from being kept underground. Having said that, production wise it proved wonderful, giving us sets that really would have been incredibly expensive to build. I watch the movie now and am so pleased at how expensive it looks!

You made an earlier space opera, entitled *Outer Touch* (1979). That's a pretty obscure movie, can you tell us something about it? The only thing I've seen from it is a still featuring a woman in fetish gear, fencing with a disembodied arm...

Right. *Outer Touch* was quite successful in America, where it was known as *Spaced Out*. It didn't do much in Britain, but in America it did actually take off, one reason for that being that they redid the soundtrack. They didn't revoice any of the human characters, but there were a jukebox and a computer that talked to each other a lot and they revoiced those, which worked very well. Basically, it was a science fiction comedy. What I would say about it is that it taught me just how difficult comedy is - the most difficult, I think, of all the genres. It's totally about getting the timing right.

What about your projected *Fiend Without A Face* sequel?

I showed what we had to Richard Gordon, who produced the original and owns the rights. He liked some of what we had, but he made a few comments which, as always, hurt a bit when we first heard them. When he came over to London and I had a chance to sit down and talk to him, I had to agree that he was right in most cases. So we headed back to the drawing board and started over. The hardest thing is to come up with that combination which will appeal to fans of the original film but also those who haven't seen it. It would be great to do those flying brains with today's effects technology!

We look forward to seeing a new Norman J. Warren film. It seems safe to say, anyway, that you've always worked in the horror genre because you love it, and you'd like to carry on doing it until the world comes round to your point of view.

It's a genre that I enjoy very much, and it would be nice, if this film could be done, to do it in Britain, because I think we're capable of producing high quality work over here. The horror film hasn't gone under and keeps fighting back. I think it's going to be with us for a long time to come. ●

German director Jörg Buttgerit caused worldwide controversy with his outrageously grisly debut movie, *Nekromantik*. Axelle Carolyn (seen right) meets up with him to see what he's been up to since...

NEW

NEKROMANTIK

In 1987, German director Jörg Buttgerit made *Nekromantik*, his first feature film, shot on Super 8 with a few friends and virtually no budget.

Despite its limited release, the movie was well received and gained a reputation in the underground and horror communities, based on its originality and shock values.

Now over fifteen years later, after a sequel, a three-year long legal fight against censorship and two other films that dealt with sex and death (*Das Todesking* and *Schramm*), Buttgerit is considered a cult director and *Nekromantik*, from its status of pure exploitation product, is now regarded as a work of art.

We seized the opportunity to meet Buttgerit at the 21st Amsterdam Fantastic Film Festival and look back together at the unusual career of an unconventional director.

What attracted you to *Nekromantik*? Was it a conscious choice to shock people? Or did you want to show a different point of view on necrophilia?

It's very hard to say, because when you make a movie you never approach it like this, it just happens. I'd made about ten or fifteen short films before that. I was part of the Berlin punk rock underground movement and this was more like an underground

film we were shooting on the weekends. It was never planned as a horror movie or a cult film. I was reading serial killers' biographies on those days, about Ed Gein and stuff, and this necrophilia topic just popped up. I'd noticed that sex and death were always mixed together in horror films but it's never approached in a very direct way...

So you've chosen to approach it in a direct way in every single movie you've made?

[Laughs] Yes. Because it just felt stupid to me to do all these detours, so I thought I wouldn't pretend it is normal, but if you do a movie about this, approach it from the point of view of the people who are in the movie, of the bad guys. There are no good guys in the movie so we have to deal with the people you have on screen - they'd normally be called bad guys. In the end there's no release, there's no authority, no policeman who arrests them... The movie is actually more based on early John Waters and underground movies than on horror films. Horror films were kind of boring at that time, they were all the same. Nowadays critics tend to put stuff in the movies that you weren't thinking about. We didn't know that Texas Chainsaw Massacre was a piece of art in the early days [laughs]... It had to age, you know? Same for my films; even in Germany where I had lots of problems with the films, they are considered art now.

So you made a movie in which there are no good guys, there's no morality, and that deals with necrophilia. How on earth did you manage to get it financed?

It wasn't really financed. We just did it like this: I shot it on Super 8, which was easily accessible, I bought a camera for 500\$ and I asked a cameraman and a guy who's credited

as a producer but who actually just gave me the film material and a place where I could edit. We never paid anyone, not even ourselves. We only shot on week-ends, there were no actors, they were just friends, so it really didn't cost a thing.

How did you get your friends to be in a film that has to do with necrophilia? It's not something anyone would do!

I'd already done all these short films so everybody was already in my movies and no one knew that my next film would be more serious, it just happened by accident! Nobody felt strange doing this, it was all very natural.

How did you see your future at that time? Did you want to make a career in the film industry or did it also just happen?

In Germany you can't earn money with horror movies. I was just trying to do something that felt right, because I thought horror movies were simply boring at the time. I didn't plan ahead. I did it just to do something right, because doing films was very natural for me. I saw my first film in a theatre when I was 4 I think. It was *The Seventh Voyage Of Sinbad*. Then I saw Universal's *Frankenstein*, I think, so it was normal for me to express myself in the horror genre.

You're credited as actor, director, producer, set designer, SFX artist and editor.

Yes, I was all of that without knowing it. When I wrote the credits I just realised I'd done everything! On some week-ends we had two people behind the camera, on others we had six, when we did special effects we needed more people. You know, nowadays it's much easier to obtain video cameras so everybody shoots movies, and it works the same way. The good thing about my movies now is that they look different because they're made on film. It'd even be hard for me to do stuff like this today. I've done a lot of music videos these last years and I've always shot them on film because it looks different; they look like movies and not like video clips and I'm very much attached to the film aesthetics.

Did you have any problems with the censors at this point?

Censorship only started a few years later when *Nekromantik II* got released, so the first one no one really noticed it. We only had two





16 mm film prints so we started in Berlin in three cinemas, with two cinemas sharing one print - the print was driven back and forth every day! And it wasn't really a release. I just happened to work in a cinema so I'd put it on the screen myself. We had this 500 seats room sold out for the premiere; I couldn't believe all these people knew about the film! We did one advertisement, and we did those cool metal-like posters - that was all. And there were people tearing down the posters anyway so I wasn't sure anyone had seen them [laughs]! We got good reviews in the press, which was really surprising.

How did *Das Todesking* (King Of Death, 1989) come about?

It was a film we did to make the horror audience go away. Horror fans really liked *Nekromantik* and they were waiting for an even grosser movie, which seemed stupid to me because it hadn't been the idea in the first place to try to top ourselves in every movie. So when horror nerds were waiting for another corpse feast, they got this very arty love story with two or three disturbing scenes but nothing more. In a way my films are classic love triangles, only one of the protagonists is dead!

Then why choose to go back and make a sequel to *Nekromantik* (1991)?

Certainly not to win the horror fans back, because it was so arty! I got them back when

the movie was banned in Germany because then they thought that there had to be something dangerous about this movie. The movie is based on an interview with a necrophiliac woman from the US that I'd read in a magazine. We approached the whole movie from her point of view; she's the bad girl in the movie, she's the aggressor and all the male characters are quite stupid in comparison. Again, if you look at the horror audience, it's mostly a male audience watching girls getting killed, raped and mutilated; so here we tried to do it from the other side, from a feminist approach. It was a bit strange to do because obviously I had a male point of view, but I wanted to look through the eyes of a female character. It really worked; after a while the film started being programmed in several feminist film festivals; I wasn't even allowed to go to

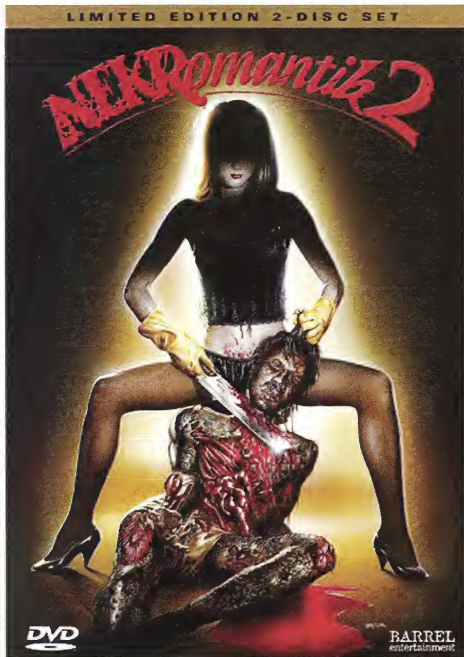
LANDMARK THEATRES and BARREL ENTERTAINMENT
Presents



FRIDAY JULY 12TH, MIDNIGHT! ONE NIGHT ONLY!
ONE SCREENING ONLY! SEE the gruesome erotic horror masterpiece
ON THE BIG SCREEN!

ALSO... Meet NEKROMANTIK director JÖRG BUTTGEREIT!
PLUS... DEAD music from the ETERNAL
ETERNAL ETERNITY

Tickets are a measly \$9.00!
ONLY AT THE LANDMARK CENTRAL CINEMA
2020 N. Clark Street at UNIVERSITY, (773) 249-7704



these festivals because I was a man! There was one festival in Austria where they only had films about female murderers and after the screening of *Nekromantik II* they had shooting lessons for women! I hadn't planned this phenomenon but I was very happy about it.

Did you have an actual budget for this one? How different was it to shoot?

We did have a budget then because during those days, we could finance one movie with the money from the last one, so the money from *Das Todesding* went into *Nekromantik II*. It was still a very low budget; we shot it on 16 mm but we had no actors, only friends. The main actress, Monika M., was a girl we'd met in a cinema; she was watching a Lucio Fulci movie on her own, so we thought that if a woman was watching *House By The Cemetery* on her free will alone, there had to be something wrong with her [laughs]. She'd never seen *Nekromantik* before, she'd only seen

Todesding and she liked it a lot, so she said yes. I think at the time she was getting separated from her boyfriend so she needed a change, and that's just what she got [laughs]. And she was very professional in her non-acting abilities.

Nekromantik II is the movie that caused you problems with the censors - what happened?

In Germany we have a law that criminalises the glorification of violence. It was originally made to ban Nazi propaganda. In the mid-eighties they tried to ban a lot of horror movies with that law and it worked out for a lot of films: *Dawn Of The Dead*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*...

Are they still banned today?

Yes! No one cares enough to change it; you'd have to go to court for that. You can find them in department stores everywhere but in censored versions, the only ones that are legal. For *Nekromantik II* we just said we didn't think



that the movie was glorifying violence, we said the movie was art because there's also a law in Germany that says that art is free. It also comes from the Nazi past when they banned a lot of art that wasn't good for the system. I defended myself pleading that my movie was art and that I had a right to express myself.

In other words in Germany, a horror movie is either art or propaganda?

Yes. The court ordered a film specialist to testify about the artistic merits of my movie and he did a twenty pages thesis about *Nekromantik II*, testifying that it was clearly an art film for many reasons and not a movie that glorified violence in any way. And so they gave me the right to show it after three years.

How did it start? Did they see the film when you released it, or did you have to ask for some sort of authorisation?

Normally they say there is no censorship in Germany, so normally you don't have to show it to a commission or anything. But if you want to have an official release, you need to have a certification, so you have to show it to a rating board that's called Free Self Control of the Film Industry. It's free, you don't have to show it, but it's better if you do. I thought I could just put my film in the cinema then; it wasn't against the law but they started worrying that someone like me could just do everything without asking anybody, and that was the main problem. When *Nekromantik II* came out, I'd made a bunch of films already and I was

When *Nekromantik II* came out, I'd made a bunch of films already and I was considered dangerous I think, so that's when they started to confiscate the film prints and filed a lawsuit against the producer, against me, against the projectionist because it's also illegal to show a film that glorifies violence to another person.



considered dangerous I think, so that's when they started to confiscate the film prints and filed a lawsuit against the producer, against me, against the projectionist because it's also illegal to show a film that glorifies violence to another person. After the lawsuit they left me in peace; they knew that if it was art they couldn't do anything against it.

Schramm was nominated for a film prize in Germany; it didn't win but it was already something; in Rotterdam, as long as *Nekromantik II* was banned in Germany they played it in a cinema - those were signs of the support I got.

Do you think there are limits to what one can put on film?

I think you should be able to express yourself. And if there aren't limits in your life, why should there be limits in films? Films are merely something that mirrors the society we live in and there is no such thing as a movie that'd make you turn into a monster... When

the Nazis were in control, that's precisely when the screen was safe. So I think a society is much healthier when the violence is onscreen instead of in the streets.

There's absolutely no proof of a link between movies and real life violence but lots of politicians pretend there is because it's easy. They can say to the desperate housewives, "we took care of the safety of your kids because we've banned violent movies," you know. They didn't care about the real problem because they could easily do something that'd make people think that they've done something.

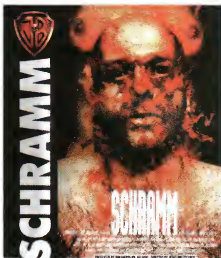
Also, people who do violent things often take movies and fantasy as excuses for what they've done; they try to avoid their responsibility because they've seen it in a film. That's what Ted Bundy said during his trial. It's also a question of gap of generations. When you're older you're alienated by horror movies, you simply don't understand what's going on in films any more.

It's the same with videogames; very often adults don't get it and that's why they think games are dangerous. The people who are in charge have no clue what they're talking about. Also, when you hear people talk about certain films they try to ban, most of the time you will find out that they've never seen these movies! The guy who tried to ban *Nekromantik II* never saw it in the first place! He'd just read about it I guess.

Did he watch it during the trial at least? No! The judge asked for a transcription of the film. He asked someone to write down all the stuff that happens in the movie, one violent scene after the other. It didn't even look like my movie. But he never cared to watch it because he thought that he was doing the right thing anyway.

Did you make Schramm (1993) during the trial then?

Yes. He did it as a statement that we wouldn't shut up and because we wanted to do something about serial killers, who were in fashion during those days with *Silence Of The*



Lambs and stuff. I'd always felt that those films never showed me anything about the killers themselves though, so in my movie I didn't want to make it commercial, I just wanted it to be inside the mind of the serial killer, in a very loose structure to show how the mind of this guy worked. It has very surrealistic scenes and it's definitely very arty...

Since those days you've made very different things, such as episodes of *Lexx* (1997) for example...

Yea, I did *Lexx*, and then special effects for movies like *The Killer Condom*, and more recently for a very weird underground movie called *The Journey Into Bliss*. The guy who directed it is a maniac who worked on this for ten years and now has huge debts!

I also did *The Monster Island*, a documentary on Japanese monster movies for a German nationwide TV station. They sent me to Tokyo to shoot it, to meet the guy who was in the Godzilla suit in the fifties.

I also did books about Japanese monster movies. I'm writing a new one with all the interviews I did in Tokyo and I also just received funding from Japan to do a book about Japanese films in Germany.

I just finished a punk rock musical in Berlin on the Ramones, which was really strange because there's only one member of the Ramones left and he came over from the US to be my musical advisor. I also wrote seven radio plays on Ed Gein, Bruce Lee, and Godzilla - film ideas that I had but didn't get financed so I wrote them into radio plays for national broadcast instead.

At one point your name was linked to Olaf Ittenbach for a movie, *Barcelona Babylon*. What happened to that project?

Oh, I don't think it'll ever happen because it was a friend of mine who was selling the rights of my films and Ittenbach's films to Tokyo and Spain and she was trying to do this film with all of us but it didn't get financed.

It would have been a movie in three parts, with every director - Ittenbach, a third one and I - directing twenty minutes, but it would have been unsatisfying I think. It would have been a very short shoot, one or two days, but it never happened and to tell you the truth I'm not unhappy about it. •



He liked birds but he hated tits... John Martin profiles Pete Walker, the latest British exploitation maven to qualify for an Anchor Bay coffin box!

A FRIGHTMARE ON WARDOUR STREET!

Ill-informed pundits periodically drivel on about the revival of the British film industry but what they're usually telling us is a modestly successful American celebration in the UK with Hugh Grant or Keira Knightley in its cast and possibly another Brit writing or directing. The *Daily Mail* film critics and their ilk who espouse these pictures can't bring themselves to acknowledge (they probably haven't even realised) that the last time we had a genuinely thriving, genuinely British film industry it was churning out schlock horror and soft-core sex comedies like there was no tomorrow... which, of course, there wasn't.

Pete Walker, who straddled these lowest common denominator cycles like a cynical colossus in the '70s, never had any qualms about serving up to the public whatever they wanted.

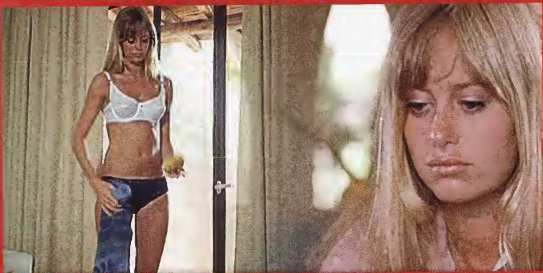
Born in Brighton in 1939, he was the son of music hall entertainer Syd Walker and would himself tread the boards as a stand-up comedian. Walker freely admits that he was a rotten comic, which I can well believe as the only time I ever met him he took one look at my beard and addressed me as "Captain Birdseye." Laugh? I thought I'd never start...

He fared rather better during a patchy directorial career now commemorated in one of those Anchor Bay coffin-shaped box sets (which comprises *Die Screaming Marianne*, *Frightmare*, *House Of Whiplash*, *House of Mortal Sin* and *The Comeback*), a companion piece to those AB sets already celebrating the cinematic achievements of Amicus, Tigon and Norman J. Warren. When I wrote about Norman's set in these pages recently I commented that he would probably be more enthusiastically remembered by UK genre buffs if he had been American, and I think this is also true of Walker, who has on more than one occasion been identified as "the British Russ Meyer." As we shall see, though, the comparison is an unhelpful one...

CAROL THATCHER - HOOKER

Financing his fledgling directorial efforts by shooting 8mm "glamour" shorts for the mail order market, Walker knocked out two pretty lame sex comedies - *For Men Only* (aka *I Like Birds*) and *School For Sex* - both released in 1968. *The Big Switch* aka *Strip Poker* came the following year. It wasn't until 1970's *Cool It Carol!* though, that Walker started to look like a director whose career might be worth following.

This is the cautionary tale of two naive Midlands kids who move to the capital in search of bright lights, only to discover the downbeat reality of "swinging London." Janet Lynn as the eponymous heroine Carol Thatcher (the full irony of this character's name would not become apparent for another several years) drifts into prostitution, while her boyfriend Joe becomes a van driver, condemning the actor who plays him, Robin Askwith, to a career of cheeky chappy proletarian roles. Walker handles this moralistic fable with a sureness of touch unhinted at in his earlier pot-



Stanley Long's *Adventures Of A Taxi Driver* (1975). When the roles dried up Evans actually worked as a taxi driver and was murdered under mysterious circumstances while, er, on the job.

George looks just great, particularly while go-go dancing during the film's groovy titles sequence. Walker really did like birds... he certainly had an eye for them (if frequently no idea what to do with them on screen).

Busty Luan Peters was the eye candy in *Man of Violence* (1971), an uninvolved, sluggish crime melodrama. Spectacular Scandinavian Page 3 girl Lena Skoog nearly took viewers' eyes out in Walker's 3-D offering *Four Dimensions of Greta* in 1972, a film whose unlikely plot (which really exists as nothing more



than a string of opportunities for Ms Skoog's boobs to erupt from the screen) is described by one character as "just like a very cheap British sex film!" Post-modern, moi?

Walker liked the stereoscopic gimmick so much that he revived it for 1974's *The Flesh and Blood Show*, a dull stagy effort that nevertheless delivered further crumpety in the delectable from of Jenny Hanley. The cast also included Ray Brooks, who would appear in several further Walker efforts but remains best remembered as the narrator of *Mr Bean!* In between these two, Walker managed to sandwich an even bigger dud, 1973's *Tiffany Jones*. This sub-*Modesty Blaise* newspaper strip adaptation starred Anouska Hempel in the title role. Hempel was sensational in Russ Meyer's *Blacksnake!* the same year, but despite the already mentioned comparison, Walker really is no Russ Meyer.

CATHOLIC TASTES

The "creative splatter with high concept" approach went totally over the top in *House Of Mortal Sin* aka *The Confessional* (1976), in which heroine Susan Penhaligon is stalked by a killer priest whose invalid mother has driven him crazy. McGillivray is so keen to paint a lurid picture of Catholic corruption that he litters his script with such contrivances as poisoned communion wafers, rosary bead strangulations and incense burner beatings. Stephanie Beacham and Sheila Keith (as a one-eyed housekeeper) are lamentably underused.

Beacham was back in *Schizo* (the other film that McGillivray managed to crank out in 1976) as the best mate of Lynn Frederick, a disturbed ice-skater convinced that she is being stalked by the man who murdered her mother. People around her start getting bumped off in various grisly manners, (throats are cut, knitting needles pierce eyeballs and - my favourite - somebody waiting for a bus is clobbered with a sledgehammer!) Despite these gory delights and the welcome sight of the future Mrs Peter Sellers in the buff, *Schizo* proceeds sluggishly and, as for suspense... the tag-line "when the left hand doesn't know who the right hand is killing!" is not only a gross misrepresentation of the medical concept of schizophrenia, it also makes the killer's identity here eminently guessable.

After *Schizo*, McGillivray departed to pen *Satan's Slave* (1976) and *Terror* (1978) for Norman J. Warren. Walker's *The Comeback* (1978) was written (with altogether less pizzazz) by Murray Smith and Michael Sloan. In this one, uncomfortably-cast real-life lounge crooner Jack Jones picks up his microphone again after a bit of a layoff, only to find himself ass-deep in a slew of gory murders. What's the connection? It's a doozy actually, revealed by Sheila Keith during a memorable, scenery-chewing rant at the film's alleged climax. There's further fun to be had from the scene in which Jones' agent (David Doyle, best known as



boilers, no doubt helped by the solidity of his source material, a *News Of The World* story brought to him by writer Murray Smith. A seed was definitely sown here... all of Walker's most watchable subsequent efforts traded on *The News Of The Screws'* patented formula of wallowing gleefully in the immorality that it was purporting to condemn.

His immediate follow ups to *Cool It Carol*, though, epitomise the formulaic dullness that Walker's CV is periodically prone to. *Die Screaming, Marianne* (1971) is an incomprehensible slice of Sub-Hitchcockian suspense that stars Susan George (just prior to her breakthrough role in *Straw Dogs*) as the title character, on the lam in Portugal from various parties intent on bumping her off and claiming her inheritance. Her male lead is none other than Barry Evans, future star of unfunny sitcom *Mind Your Language* and countless British sex comedies including



as Bosley in *Charlie's Angels*) is revealed as a closet transvestite.

Bill Owen (from *Last Of The Summer Wine*) plays Keith's husband, Penny Irving makes a welcome albeit brief appearance and the irritating Pamela Stephenson takes a role that was originally offered to Kim Basinger. Round about this time Walker was one of the directors (along with Russ Meyer... yep, it's him again) considered for the projected Sex Pistols film, but his apparent belief that Jack Jones (effectively playing himself) was a cutting edge contemporary artist suggest it was a blessing for all that these plans came to nothing.

HORROR DREAM TEAM

Jones' Comeback was such a box office flop that Walker was obliged to return to those betes noirs boobies and the exploitation genre with *Horne Before Midnight* (1979), a cautionary tale of jaulbait shenanigans in the music business that's nothing like as titillating as it would like to be. The cast includes Penny Irving again plus the doomed Debbie Linden (whose wasted life would ultimately imitate Walker's "art") and Chris Jagger, presumably because Walker couldn't afford Mick.

He certainly managed a better cast with *House of the Long Shadows* (1983), the first (and last) film to co-star the horror dream team of Vincent Price, Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee and John Carradine... Elsa "Bride Of Frankenstein" Lanchester was also scheduled to appear in it but her participation was nixed at the last minute by ill-health. Sheila Keith stood in, admirably. Unfortunately Walker's stellar cast was completely wasted in Michael (Mark Of The Devil) Armstrong's thoroughly stacy adaptation of Earl Der Biggers' creaking old theatrical chestnut *Seven Keys To Baldpate*, in which Desi Arnaz Jr is bet that he can't write a best seller during a night in a haunted house. No doubt he couldn't, although he might conceivably have managed the script of the next Peter Walker movie... except of course that there wasn't one.



Walker's big gambit of gearing up from exploitation to a "prestige" production garnered dismal returns at the box office, so he laid down his camera for an allegedly lucrative career in real estate. He continues to beaver away at this today, apart from making the odd appearance at film festivals and on DVDs devoted to his work!

In his indispensable book *Doing Rude Things (The History Of The British Sex Film)*, erstwhile partner-in-cinematic-crime cum critic McGillivray concludes "Walker was a man of his time but *House of the Long Shadows* proves that time had marched on."

Indeed it had, but thankfully Anchor Bay's box affords us the welcome opportunity to roll back the years and immerse ourselves once again in Walker's trademark mix of dodgy social comment, bloody butchery and mini-skirted minxes with horrible tits. They really don't make 'em like this any more, and in all honesty they probably shouldn't. •

BRAIN-MUNCHING CANNIBAL!



Walker's career only got interesting again when he hooked up with puckish screenwriter and perennial mischief-maker David McGillivray, who in his other incarnation as a film critic had been (rightly) scathing about some of Walker's earlier efforts. Their first collaboration, 1974's *House of Whipcord* is a minor WIP classic within whose walls unfolds an absurdist allegory of reactionary backlash against liberal social mores.

At a hep London party, French nude model Anne-Marie (played by the super-cute Penny Irving, another of the early Page 3 girls) is picked up by moody youth Marky Dessade (groan!) and spirited away to his mum and dad's place in the country. Our little French filly really should have been alerted by her nouvelle beau's name, because mum and dad's place turns out to be a disused prison that they have reopened with the express purpose of incarcerating, flogging and hanging immortal little trollops like her.

Prominent among Anne-Marie's tormentors is prison guard "Walker" (!), a Nazi dyke played by Sheila Keith. This formidable Scottish actress, a *Crossroads* alumnus who would enliven most of Walker's subsequent efforts, is a criminally underrated, honest to goodness British horror icon.

Regrettably she passed away in October 2004, but not before Steve Coogan had acknowledged her place in the Brithorror pantheon with a role in his spot-on spoof TV series *Dr. Terrible's House of Horrible*.

Keith is back as brain-munching cannibal Dorothy Yates in the same year's *Frightmare*, another McGillivray-penned outrage. The picture opens with her and her complicit husband Edmund (Rupert Davies) being incarcerated until they are no longer a danger to society. Fifteen years later they're out of chokey. Dorothy's giving tarot readings to gullible young women, Edmund and daughter Jackie (Deborah Fairfax) are bringing her animal brains to try and keep her on the straight and narrow but Dorothy and her twisted younger daughter Debbie (Kim Butcher) have other ideas, and soon those gullible young women start disappearing...

Ever the opportunist, Walker claimed serious sociological relevance for this berserk bloodbath, but it's clear that his interest was more in black and decker mayhem than serious issues of punishment and redemption. The



commercial and critical success of *Whipcord* had persuaded Walker to abandon exploitation in favour of straight horror, which must have come as quite a relief for the man who once protested, "I hate tits... horrible tits!" (I told you he was no Russ Meyer!).



Quentin Tarantino

ITALIAN CHEESE ROYALE

Having concluded the epic *Kill Bill* saga, Quentin Tarantino is earnestly considering which Italian exploitation classic to remake as his next movie. Should he choose Enzo Castellari's *Inglorious Bastards* or Lucio Fulci's *The Psychic*? We got him together with John Martin over a cheese royale to pick his favourite spaghetti trash flicks!

Face to Face

AKTIV

Directed by Sergio Sollima.
Starring Gian Maria Volonté,
Tomas Milian, William Berger



wide screen — wide screen — wide screen — wide screen

QT: I've been a big fan of Italian films for a long, long time, following them ever since I was a teenager, y'know. They used to be well distributed back in the '60s, but they showed up big time in the video explosion in the early '80s. It's stopping now, because there's no market for dubbed films in America. When they come out, they're really just thrown out there, y'know? They could care less. But for a while there, video stores were buying everything, and that was when all this stuff got released. Gino H. Santiago movies and everything, there were a zillion of those, Anthony Dawson (Antonio Margheriti) and Enzo G. Castellari films all over the place. Of course back in the '70s was the last hurrah of these things playing the theatres.

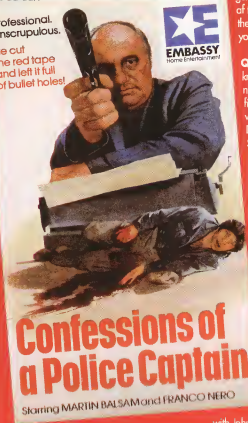
JM: After which they started closing all the grind-houses down...

QT: Right. I got into it, of course, through Maria Bava. Martin Scorsese has been championing Bava for years. After Bava I got into spaghetti westerns, guys like Sergio Sollima. Until I came over to the UK I'd never seen Sollima's **Face To Face**, just read about it for years. I'm desperate to see the spaghetti western Lina Wertmüller directed, but you can't get it.

'I really like Blastfighter, and I actually like Demons 2 more than Demons 1. I'm on the Demons 2 side, actually!'

Professional. Unscrupulous.

He cut the red tape and left it full of bullet holes!



Starring MARTIN BALSAM and FRANCO NERO

JM: What about Caracul?

QT: Well, Caracul's OK, but Sollima's fantastic, y'know: **Face To Face** and

The Big Gundown - that one is a particular favourite of mine. Also Damiano Damiani, who did **A Bullet For The General** and **Confessions Of A Police Captain** - with Franco Nero and Martin Balsam - and **Amityville 2**. He's really good... Sergio Leone, naturally. Then I discovered "Anthony Dawson."

JM: I can't seem to find anyone with a bad word to say about Antonio Margheriti. He made pictures in so

many different genres. Which of them were the ones that you got into?

QT: Well, let me see. I don't know where it was started noticing who he was, but the first movie where I knew I was watching an Anthony Dawson movie was **The Stranger And The Gunfighter**, the Lee Van Cleef/La Lish kung-fu western. I collect his films, I've got a pretty big Anthony Dawson collection now. A bunch of my friends and I are into a lot of his early movies, really neat stuff like **Castle Of Blood** and **The Long Hair Of Death**. But I think probably my favourite Anthony Dawson movie ever is **The Cannibals Are In The Streets** (Cannibal Apocalypse).

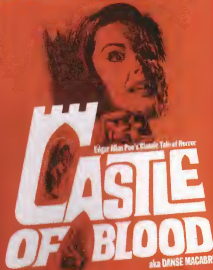
JM: I did an interview with John Marghen from that movie.

QT: Yeah, I remember that guy from so many movies, he's fantastic, been in... **Cannibal Ferox**, and the Lucia Fulci picture **Gates Of Hell** (**City Of The Living Dead**). So I like **Cannibals Are In The Streets**, I like **The Last Hunter**. It's hysterical, the way these movies have been released and re-released in America. Y'know, Dawson did all these Vietnam movies, **The Last Hunter**, **Tornado Strike Force**, all these things, and he did them before **Rambo**, they were all actually

Italian Trash Cinema

UNCENSORED INTERNATIONAL VERSION

The living and the dead change places in this orgy of terror!



DVD

Apocalypse

Now rip-offs. He's a great rip-off director. He'd do **Deer Hunter** rip-offs, which is what **The Last Hunter** is, he'd do **Apocalypse Now** rip-offs. What's funny is the fact that when the **Rambo** movies came out, I mean **Rambo** is really well done and everything, but it has the flavour of an Anthony Dawson film. In America they just re-released all his **Deer Hunter** rip-offs and marketed them as **Rambo** rip-offs! Another Dawson movie I like is **Take A Hard Ride**, that's a cool one...

After all that stuff I started getting into the mafia movies, a whole stock of them, and the number one director there was Fernando Di Leo. He was sort of like the Don Siegel of Italy, did a whole bunch of movies. There are two he did, one was called - I think the original title of it was **Rulers Of The City** - and another one called **Hitman**, **Rulers Of The City** starred Jack Palance, and **Hitman** starred Henry Silva and Woody Strode, and they've been refitted so many times in America, because they've been released and re-released, so five different companies have them, all under different names. It's common to go into a video store and find that the owners have the same movie under different titles, and don't even know it's the same thing.

JM: And you get movies with the artwork from completely different movies in their boxes...

QT: In America that even happened to the **Mean Streets** box! You had like a still from **The Getaway** on the **Mean Streets** box! **Rulers Of The City** has been known as **Big Boss**, **Mr Scarface**, and **The Sicilian Connection**. But Fernando di Leo is really cool. **Hitman** is a really neat

BARBARA STEELE



THE LONG HAIR OF DEATH

movie, and he did another - I'm almost positive it's him - it's one of my favorites from the Franco Nero action movies of the '70s, a film called *Street Law*, in which he stars with Barbara Bach. It's like a *Death Wish* kind of movie, and it's terrific, man! It is a great, great action film, it's just really wonderful. Franco Nero is the meek, mild guy, who's pushed into being a vigilante and stuff - really terrific. A lot of di Leo's movies were really cool, because sometimes they'd get someone who was a big star in Italy like Franco Nero, Tomas Milton or someone like that, or sometimes they'd get an American star, like *Rico* with Christopher Mitchum, that's a good one.

Robert Blake did a movie over there called *Ripped Off*, before *Baretta* had happened. They get 'em over there, people like Henry Silva, but the thing is, whether or not they had an American actor or an Italian as the lead, they always had a fallen American actor playing the big bad guy - Martin Balsam or Lee J. Cobb or Richard Conte or Arthur Kennedy, y'know, all the way down the line. Alain Delon did a good Italian Mafia movie that was released in America, called *No Way Out*, that's really cool. Richard Conte is the mob guy in it, the Big Boss Man, he was really good.

JM: Telly Savalas did a lot of those.

QT: Oh, Telly Savalas did a zillion movies in Italy. What's cool though is that when the mafia movies started, Sergio Sollima just switched from doing spaghetti westerns to doing mafia crime movies, and his best was *The Family* with Charles Branson, Jill Ireland and Telly Savalas. I think it was known in Britain as *Violent City*, because the original title is *Citta Violenta* and Lina Wertmüller wrote the script for that... it's terrific. What's wild about *The Family* is that it's a full-on remake, with the same story points and everything, of *Out Of The Past*, the Jacques Tourneur/Robert Mitchum thing. Exact same story, but Branson is a hitman as opposed to a detective, Telly Savalas is in the Kirk Douglas part and Jill Ireland's in the Jane Greer role. It's terrific, really great. Sollima also did a remake of his own movie, *The Big Gundown*, in a modern setting, called *Revolver*. It's got many titles on video. I've got it as *Blood On The Streets*. Oliver Reed's in the Lee Van Cleef role, and Fabio Testi in the Tomas Milon role. Other guys I like are Alberto de Martino, Duccio Tessari.

JM: As well as the spaghetti westerns, Tessari made a couple of excellent gialli, *Death Occurred Last Night* and *The Bloody Butterfly*, the one with Helmut Berger in it.

CRISTIANA McCOLL
JANET AGREEN



MIEDO

EN LA CIUDAD DE LOS MUERTOS VIVIENTES



FASTMANCOLOR

Director: LUCIO FULCI

QT: Oh yeah! There's one of the Italian mafia movies, I'm trying to remember if Fernando di Leo did it or not, but it's a great one with Helmut Berger, called *Mad Dog*. It was terrific, and it's got Helmut Berger as the bad guy, and he totally lives up to the title, just an out of control crazy hitman killer, and this cop's after him... I mean, it's a really cool movie, it's so neat. And De Martino is just great. He did a superb film called *Strange Shadows In An Empty Room*. There was a great car-chase in it, and a kung-fu fight with a gang of transvestites in a penitentiary on top of a skyscraper. John Saxon's in it, Martin Landau...

QT: I love De Martino; *Holocaust 2000*'s good, *The Tempter*.

JM: That one was shot by Joe D'Amato...

QT: Oh really? It's funny, I haven't seen that many of his movies actually, but Michele Soavi really gives him the credit for taking a chance on him. I mean it was D'Amato who really took the chance on Michele's talent - Dario didn't... Joe D'Amato did it! And *Stagefright* is definitely his best movie. It's better than anything Argento's ever done. The only thing that can touch it is some of the sequences in *Opera*. I love *Opera*, it doesn't work from beginning to end like *Stagefright* does, but some of the sequences - you know, the first time they do the "needles under the eye" thing, wow! But for my money, *Stagefright* is the best Italian horror film of the 80s and

Michele is the most talented guy on the Italian film scene.

JM: When I was watching the infamous "cap torture" scene in *Reservoir Dogs*, with that guy tied in the chair and forced to watch Michael Madsen going through his routine, it made me think of Cristina Marschallach, tied to that pillar in *Opera* with her eyes pinned open...

QT: Oh yeah, that wasn't conscious but it's an interesting analogy, yeah but the thing about crime films, in particular, is that the Yakuza movies they make in Japan, the triad movies they make in Hong Kong, the mafia movies they make in Italy, Jean Pierre Melville's films in France... the thing is, we're all telling the same stories, but we're all telling them differently, because we're all from different cultures, different nationalities, and that's what's really interesting to me, how different cultures attack the same story. The story's almost exactly the same in every country, y'know: the hitman's supposed to do something for someone, but he doesn't do it, so they kill his girlfriend, and then he goes to get The Big Boss.

It's like a myth, right, and in Japan they do it differently, in Hong Kong they do it differently, in Italy they do it differently. I'm familiar with all this stuff because I've been watching it my whole life. I got the job in the video store because I'm like a film expert...

JM: And you're a self-taught expert, you didn't learn any of it in film-school?

BEAST WITH A GUN



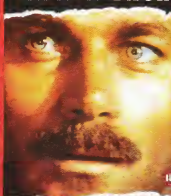
QT: Hey, they don't teach you "The films of Anthony Dawson" at UCLA! The thing about people like Dawson or what's his name, Enzo G. Castellari or whatever, is that these guys do like a zillion movies, and I get a kick out of those films because, in the case of those guys, and in particular Dawson, I mean the guy was a hack but he was a hack who really knew what he was doing, you're in good hands and they're real fun, and Castellari, he did a load of disposable stuff like *The Bronx Warriors* and all those *Mad Max*-type movies, but I think he's probably also the director who's worked with Franco Nero

more than anybody... The crime/action movies they did together are really good. He did one movie, I think it's one of the best movies in all Italian exploitation, and I plan to remake it – *The Inglorious Bastards*!

JM: That's the one with GIs in Nazi Germany posing themselves off as Gestapo men...

QT: Right, they're American soldiers who have been condemned to death and they escape, so they're trying to get to neutral Switzerland, trying to carve their way out,

FRANCO NERO
BABARA BACH



REVENGE



fighting both the Americans and the Nazis. Bo Svenson's in it, and Fred Williamson. It's terrific, it really is, really good, and the script is fantastic. It's like an homage to Sam Peckinpah's *Cross Of Iron*, which was a smash in Italy, so they made a bunch of *Cross Of Iron* rip-offs and that's what this movie, stylistically, is taking its cue off.

JM: *Cross Of Iron* was released on a double-bill with *Suspria* over here.

QT: *Cross Of Iron* just came and went in America, but in Germany and Italy it was a smash – I always follow all these trends, in fact the only one I don't follow that much, because they really didn't do them that well though they did them forever – is those post-apocalypse *Mad Max* rip-offs. I love *Mad Max*, though.

JM: Have you seen *Rats – Night Of Terror*, by Bruno Mattei?

QT: No, but I've heard a lot about it. He's known as "Vincent Dawn" in the States. He did a western actually, which I'd be interested to see. It's called *White*

Some of the Quenster's favourites back in the days when he was working in a video shop: Franco Nero, spaghetti westerns, Italian Mad Max ripoffs and Lucio Fulci gore opuses. Well waddya know, the guy really is one of us!

Apache. But one of those post-apocalyptic movies I did like was... I don't know if it was a real Italian one, but this one was about these guys attempting to repopulate the Earth, Martin Dalmán's *After The Fall Of New York*.

JM: That's Sergio Martino.

QT: Oh yeah? I didn't realise that was Sergio Martino, that's fantastic! He's the guy who did, er, *Cannibal God*, right, with Ursula Andress and Stacey Kach.

JM: That was released quite cut over here, although it still became a "video nasty". Maybe the cuts were a factor, but actually I think that's one of the least entertaining cannibal movies.

QT: Me too. *Cannibal Holocaust* is my favourite, a really cool film, but Martino did a great job on *After The Fall Of New York*. George Eastman's in it as "The Big Ape", and there was this one guy in the movie, I don't recall his name but he's the guy who's protecting the girl once he's found her, and it's great, because he's kind of like an Italian William Smith. I see him crop up all the time, he's kind of a real big guy with sandy-coloured hair and he just looks like an Italian William Smith. He leads some rebel crowd in it, and when he finds this woman, the last fertile woman, he protects her, that kind of thing and he has the same part as the big guy in *The Ladykillers*, basically! And Michael Sapikwi's really good in it too.

JM: He was in *Blastfighter* as well...

QT: Yeah, *Blastfighter*'s really good. I think that's Lamberto Bava's best movie. *Macabre*'s pretty good as well, and I heard that he directed about half of *Shock*, which I absolutely love. People who like *Shock* say it was all Maria, those who don't like it say Lamberto did it [Laughs] But yeah, I like *Macabre*, I really like *Blastfighter*, and I actually like *Demons 2* more than *Demons 1*. I'm on the *Demons 2* side, actually. *Demons 2* didn't get a theatrical release in America. It was really cool. I actually worked for a company for a while – Imperial entertainment, it's Imperial America out here, I think – and they released a bunch of Italian stuff for a long time, so it was really cool. They released *Demons 2*, which was the biggest of all their Italian things, they also re-released



'I just love the fact that like, the zombies in this movie run, shoot machine-guns, fly planes!'

JM: Could you figure out that ending, though, with the slow-motion and the spider-web and everything? What was that all about?

QT: Yeah, yeah, exactly. I have absolutely no idea what that means. **House By The Cemetery** is also great fun, it has that great sequence where the kid's head is held against the door while his father is on the other side trying to smash through it with an axe. That's more or less a replay of the scene in **Gates Of Hell** where they're digging up the girl, which I actually think, along with the zombie/shark fight, is the best sequence Fulci's ever done. That "digging up the girl" scene – great! I really love John Margherita in that film too, he's such a cool character...

JM: Right, he lives in this shack with a blow-up doll and a decomposing baby, but he's still a real wov with the girls. Gives us all hope...

QT: And everybody else talks about him so much, I mean they talk about him more than they do about any character in the movie, even the priest. I think it's so funny, everyone's looking for him, then he bumps into this teenage girl and it's like: "Hi, how y' doin'?" and they sit down, smoking a joint and everything, fu'king great! I like **The Psychic (Sette Note In Nero)**, too. That film reminds me so much of **Obsession** by Brian de Palma. It's just got that slow, dreamy, opulent, soft-focus kind of feel to it, really beautiful.

JM: A lot of these Italian movies are a real acquired taste, because some of them are all action, rah-rah-tah, and others are really slow, and they're kind of puzzling to people brought up on the pacing of Hollywood movies. But so many people are into them now.

QT: Sure. They are an acquired taste, and you have to forgive a lot of things in them, but they're fun and I just like the kind of operatic feel that they bring to it. I don't know what it is, why I get such a kick out of them, because they go crazy with all these zooms and everything, the sense of over-the-topness in them is really cool, really neat, and I like the fact that you're into a brand of cinema that not everyone in the world is into. It's like being in this select little club!



some great Italian Westerns, Duccio Tessari films like **The Return Of Ringo**, and the first **Ringo** movie, and they released lots of Larry Ludman movies and Vincent Dawn movies.

JM: Are you into Luigi Cozzi?

QT: He's OK, I mean I liked **Alien Contamination**.

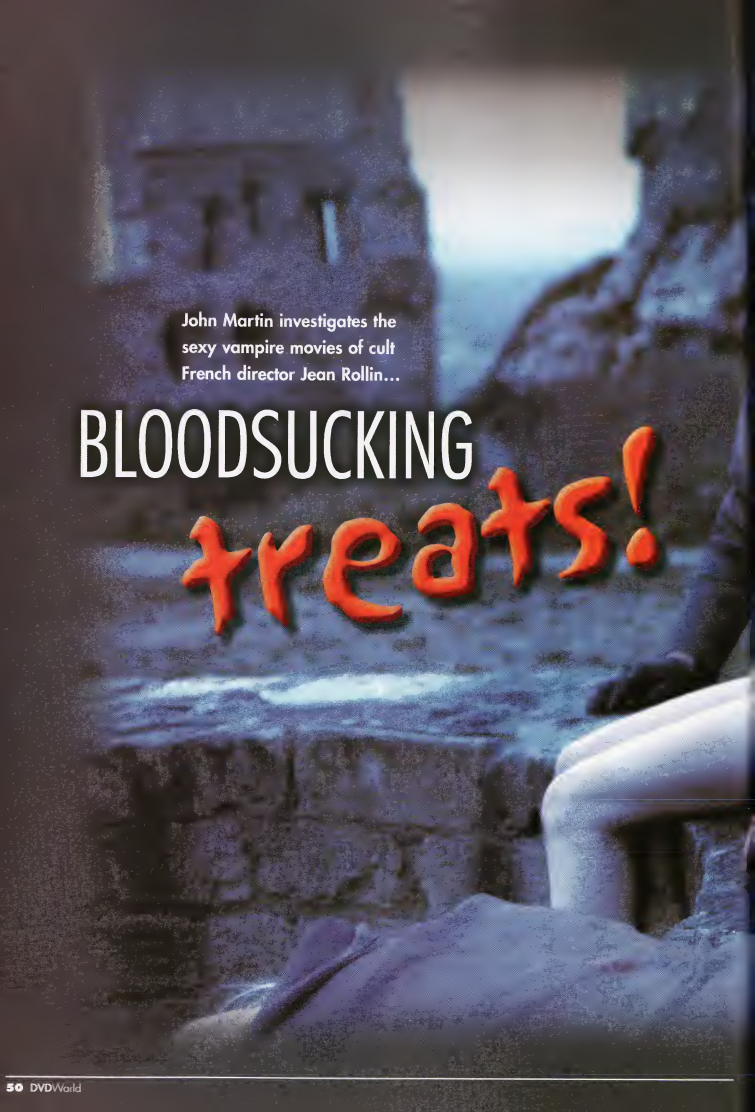
JM: I told him once that I really enjoyed **Contamination** and his reaction was to just fall about laughing, like it was the most outrageous idea ever that anyone would compliment him on that movie. I mean, it's easily his best movie, for Christ's sake.

QT: Yeah, it's definitely my favourite movie of his. He did another one I'd like to watch, but I can't remember what it was. I like a lot of the zombie movies, like

City Of The Walking Dead (Nightmare City), the Umberto Lenzi one. I just love the fact that like, the zombies in this movie run, shoot machine-guns, fly planes. It's like – P-ck man, it's no fun being chased by a zombie and he can run as fast as you! That was such a neat idea, based on the whole **Nosferatu** thing, to have the plane landing with all these zombies in it, really cool, and I had a lot of fun with it. I got a big kick out of all those zombie movies. The only problem I have with **Zombie (Zombie Flesh Eaters)** is the fact that people in it don't turn around fast enough! Me and my friends were watching the movie, and we all agreed that, like, if you were in this jungle full of flesh eating zombies, OK, and they turn up behind you... guys in the movies always turn around like (mimes turning around v-e-r-y slowly). I would be like the Jesse Owens, man, the Carl fuc'ing Lewis of turning around.

JM: Right, and I always loved the fact that although they know that dead people are coming back as flesh-eating zombies, they decide to lie down in the cemetery and have a necking session!

QT: Oh, **Zombie** has one of the most out of control scenes I've ever seen in my life! It's the scene where the zombie falls to the bottom of the ocean floor, and he's just tripping along, minding his own business, and a shark comes to eat him! So he starts eating the shark! Now what's weird about that scene is that while you're watching it, it actually makes a little sense, but when you try and describe this scene to someone who hasn't seen the movie, they just go: "What? That was in a movie?" and you say: "Yeah, I suppose it sounds pretty wild," but in the movie it seems like a real commonplace. But my favourite Fulci is **Gates Of Hell**. That's a great movie.



John Martin investigates the
sexy vampire movies of cult
French director Jean Rollin...

BLOODSUCKING treats!

Brace yourselves... *Dark Side's* Region 0 *Double Thrill Collection*, which kicked off with a disc coupling Jean Rollin's *Fascination* and *Requiem For A Vampire*, following up with the equally alluring toothsome twosome *Rape Of The Vampire/The Living Dead Girl*, is set to keep its schedule of Rollin releases rollin' with sets comprising *Lips of Blood/Shiver of The Vampires*, *The Iron Rose/Sidewalks of Bangkok* and *Demoniacs/The Nude Vampire*.

It was Rollin who took Hammer's sexy vampire films of the early '70s to their logical (to him, at least) conclusion. True, Rollin has never achieved anything like the commercial success of those British blood 'n' boob blockbusters, but no doubt that's exactly how he likes it. A hardcore surrealist with a definite, warped agenda of his own, Rollin stages his Gallic Goth efforts as perverse passion plays (complete with a cast of reluctant vampires, willing victims and gorgeous ghoul gals), in which the curse of vampirism - "the blessed malediction" - is depicted as a distorted reflection of our all-too-human desires.

Having made several black and white shorts to alleviate the tedium of his day-job at a news-reel company, Rollin celebrated the completion of his national service in 1966 by shooting another one, *The Queen Of The Vampires*. American producer Sam Selsky was impressed enough with what he saw to finance an extension of this intended programme filler to feature length, so in 1967 Rollin shot new footage that would be released with the original material, the following year, as *Le Viol De Vampire (Rape Of The Vampire)*. Partly lensed at Paris's legendary Grand Guignol Theatre of gore, this was to be the first of many Rollin/Selsky collaborations for Les Films ABC. Intended to capture the spirit of Saturday morning cinema serials, Rollin's feature debut is a little too self-indulgent for its own good, but marked the genesis of a unique personal vision that would be elaborately embroidered over the course of several subsequent efforts.

1969's *La Vampire Nue (The Nude Vampire)* was the first picture in which Rollin had the luxury of colour, and he sure didn't go at it by halves, with eye-blistering visuals that seem influenced in equal part by Max Ernst's surrealist paintings and Kenneth Anger's underground cinema. The equally lurid - and completely baffling - plot of this avant garde production manages to pack in fetish-costumed debauchery, trans-dimensional aliens, evolutionary mutations and a vampire-worshipping suicide cult.

"Do you understand any of this?", one character asks another towards the end of this picture, and its hero's continuing efforts to find out exactly what his dad is getting up to down at the local Hell Fire Club are matched by the viewer's doomed attempts to make some sense of the proceedings. You might well think that Stanley Kubrick spent some time pondering this enigmatic little offering, on the evidence of his lavish-budgeted snoozathon *Eyes Wide Shut*.

Le Frisson Des vampires (Shiver of The Vampires aka The Vampires Thrill 1970) opens with a "Brad and Janet"-type couple arriving at a vampire's castle on the eve of their wedding. By the time "Brad" has twigged that their joppish bloodsucking hosts are out to ensnare his bride, she is lost to the dark, doomed romance of vampirism. In a throwback to Murnau's Expressionist vampire milestone, *Nosferatu* (1921), Rollin's film concludes with the vampires lingering in lethal sunlight to make love to her on Dieppe beach (a location that crops up at some point in most of his pictures) and you get the impression that, worn out by their twilight existence, they really rather welcome their extinction.

Yep, the bloodsuckers in this seem anything but thrilled with their vampiric condition, as their frequent rambling monologues reveal. Uncharacteristically for a Rollin effort, the film is a trifle over-talky, a fault amply compensated for by such surreal, hallucinatory treats as lady vampires climbing out of grandfather clocks and appearing in fire-places, not to mention the scene in which the male lead is apparently attacked by library books. There's a daft, sub-Siouxsie doom metal score, and trivia buffs will be delighted to learn that parts of the film were shot around the tomb of Maurice Chevalier - fang 'eaven for little ghouls, eh?



Les distributeurs associés présentent:



UN FILM DE JEAN ROLLIN. PRODUCTION FILMS MODERNES ET FILMS A.B.C.

Sandra JULIEN - Dominique - Nicole NANCEL - Jean-Marie DURAND

Michel DELAHAYE - Jacques RIBIOLLES - MARIE-PIERRE et KUELAN

EASTMANCOLOR

Requiem For A Vampire (1971) opens in the thick of the (highly confusing) action, as girls in clown disguises, on the run from a bungled heist (*Reservoir Dogs* be damned), ditch their wounded male accomplice and torch their getaway car. After a Benny Hill-type interlude in which they're chased around a wood by a bread delivery man, one of the girls falls into an open grave and her pal doesn't bother rescuing her until she's been buried alive.

Following a perfunctory bout of lesbian snogging they make their way to a castle, where afghan waist-coated vampire flunkies whip them while a lady blood-sucker plays gothic fugues on a church organ. The girls try to escape, but all roads lead back to the castle. Eventually they meet the vampire of the title, who is attempting in vain (or should that be "in vein"?) to make fully-fledged bloodsuckers of his followers. "I am the last vampire, the race will die with me," he declares, but not unhappily. He wants "an end to crimes and blood". The girls decide to stay on as his handmaidens. Fair enough.

Requiem's plot, such as it is, recalls that of *Shiver of The Vampires*, though the sado-masochistic stuff presented so playfully in that one has a harder edge here, suggesting the influence of Spanish sleaze-maven Jesus Franco (like Franco, Rollin was by now moonlighting in the hardcore market with such XXX-rated efforts as *Impudent Girls* and *Bacchanales Sexuelles*). But again what persists is the morbid, melancholy poetry in Rollin's vision of reluctant immortality.

JEAN LOU PHILIPPE, ANNE BRIAND
NATHALIE PERREY, PAUL BISOGLIA
Mise en scène: JEAN ROLLININTERDIT AUX MOINS DE 13 ANS
EASTMANCOLOR

Visa n° 1568



Above:
The stylish French
poster for *Shiver of the Vampires*.
Right: Some
atmospheric scenes
from Jean Rollin's
Lips of Blood.
Opposite: *Shiver of the Vampires*.





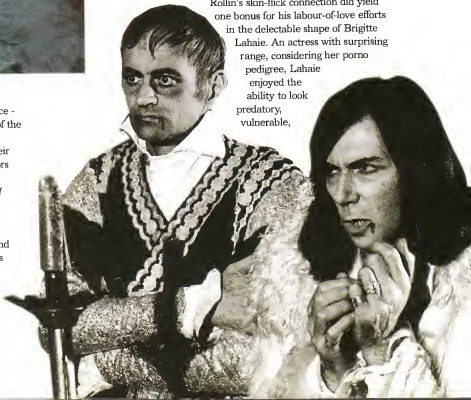
1972's *Rose Of Iron* (*La Rose De Fer*), is long on arty pretensions and features Francoise Pascal (later a familiar face - and pair of knockers - in crappy TV sit-coms) at the centre of the expected grave-yard shenanigans. The following year's *Les Demonjaques* is a salty saga of ship-wrecked girls who sell their soul to the devil in exchange for magical revenge on the sailors who raped them.

Filed in run-down sections of Paris, 1975's *Lips Of Blood* (*Levres De Sang*) generates an unparalleled atmosphere of decadent, elegant decay. The most dream-like of all Rollin's pictures, it follows the story of a young man fascinated by puzzling flashbacks to mysterious events in a gothic castle, and visions of a beautiful woman in white. She turns out to be his sister, entombed in a crypt by their mother for vampirising their father. Mom entrusts Jr with the task of killing his wayward sibling, but instead they become lovers, and her release is also the signal for a vampire invasion of the hapless outside world. Mom gets beheaded and her incestuous offspring head off from Dieppe in a beautiful pea-green coffin... a happy ending, Rollin style!

Although rated by many as Rollin's finest hour-and-a-half, *Lips* received only negligible distribution. So to keep himself afloat for a while our hero began cranking out hard-core porn full-time for the next three years, racking up (or should that be racking off?) such sensitive entries as *Sweet Penetrations*, *Deep Penetrations*, *Sensual Vibrations*, *Perverse Introductions*, *Vicious Penetrations*, *Countess X* and *Disco Sex* under the guise of "Michel Gentil." *The Seduction Of Amy* alias *Phantasmes* (cut from 88 to 49 minutes to achieve an 'X' certificate in Britain) proved to be a hopelessly misconceived attempt to fuse hard-core imagery with

Rollin's vampiric obsessions.

Rollin's skin-flick connection did yield one bonus for his labour-of-love efforts in the delectable shape of Brigitte Lahaie. An actress with surprising range, considering her porno pedigree, Lahaie enjoyed the ability to look predatory, vulnerable,





seductive, or all of these things at the same time... that's why the lady is a vamp! Described by Rollin as "a Nordic Goddess", Lahaie adapted very well to the horror genre, often supplying the standout moments in Rollin's more mundane offerings, e.g. his George Romero knock-off *The Grapes Of Death* (*La Raisins De La Mort*, 1978) in which she was afforded the privilege of recreating one of scream queen supreme Barbara Steele's show-stopping shots from *Black Sunday*).

Despite such startling, isolated moments as the sight of a girl crucified on a door, and the perverse pathos of a zombieified crop duster telling his wife he loves her, even as he's decapitating her, this is merely a pedestrian zombie pot-boiler, in which Rollin appears unable to adapt Romero's living dead formula to a personal vision, in the way that the early David Cronenberg and spaghetti splatter meister Lucio Fulci managed to do.

Lahaie's galvanising presence, debauched glamour and warped sensuality were better showcased in 1979's *Fascination*, where she appears bare-breasted and becloaked, swinging a mean scythe to dispose of the enemies of a genteel, turn-of-the-Century blood-drinking cult. Operating out of a predictably grandiose villa, these guys are decadent sensualists rather than bona-fide vampires... Who better to serve them, then, than Lahaie, to whose laughing eyes and taunting lips Rollin's camera returns, time after time, to pay ultra close-up homage? *Fascination*, indeed!

Unfortunately, both Lahaie and several thousand feet of celluloid were totally wasted on *La Nuit Des Traquees* (1980). I've no idea what that title means, and even less idea of what is supposed to be going on in this one. Phil Hardy's *Aurum Encyclopaedia Of Horror Films* claims that it's about "gamma rays being used to produce zombies," a potted synopsis that doesn't seem to gel with the French print I saw - not exactly a first for



Above:
There's no shortage of gorgeous girls of offer in Rollin's sexy *Shiver of The Vampire*...

Mr Hardy. Don't be fooled by the still of scissors embedded in somebody's eye-sockets, so often reproduced to trap the unwary gorehound. More typical of the film's overall tone is an interminable scene involving a woman trying to eat soup. Anyone who's ever suffered through one of Cronenberg's student "underground" films in the line of duty, be warned - this is even

more boring than they are!

Rollin's career took another downward spiral with the same year's *Zombie Lake* (understandably directed under the pseudonym "J.A. Laser"). Inheriting this project on less than a day's notice, after Jesus Franco had mysteriously disappeared - presumably along with all the money and the script, if indeed there ever was one - Rollin's total lack of interest in the proceedings is evident in such classic scenes as the one in which rotting Wehrmacht storm troopers rise to ravage a skinny dipping ladies' basketball team, one of whom (obviously waiting for direction from the dozing Rollin) frolics in gay abandon as her team mates are dragged down to a watery grave all around her. Rollin also shot the similarly aimless, ambulating undead footage that was spliced into Franco's *Virgin Among The Living Dead*, converting it into something 'virgin' on the ridiculous! A couple of years later though, Rollin showed what he was really capable of - when he could be

bothered - with *La Mort Vivante* (*The Living Dead Girl*).

Allegedly another zombie flick, this one really relied on Rollin's trump card, his doomy vampire vision. While it begins like any amount of other early '80s living dead epics, with recently deceased Francoise Blanchard being revived when a handy-dandy earthquake spills toxic waste in her underground crypt, the picture soon takes a far more interesting, lyrical and tragic turn as her childhood friend, played by pretty Marina Fierro, resolves to keep Blanchard alive with the blood of innocent



bypassers. Simultaneously, she attempts to bring her friend back to something resembling her old self. But the more Blanchard "recovers," the more she recognises and suffers on account of her undead plight. Pierro ploughs on regardless, with predictably disastrous results.

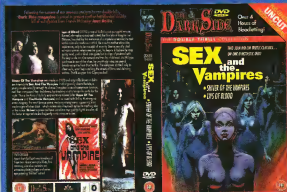
It's easy to see how such American zero budgeters as *Goregasm* and *Cannibal Hooks* have been influenced by Rollin's work, but it's far more fascinating to recognise themes that later form the basis of the *Hellraiser* and *Return Of The Living Dead* series cropping up here. One small grouse - Rollin leaves the lesbian implications of Pierro's feelings for her ghoulfriend regrettably (and uncharacteristically) underdeveloped: still well worth a look though, and possibly Rollin's last throw as a director to be taken seriously.

His career, which had been losing momentum for some time, has gradually petered out during recent years in such increasingly sporadic and unimpressive efforts as *The Streets Of Bangkok* (1984), *Lost In New York* (1989) and *Killer Car* (1993), the old obsessions occasionally resurfacing in the likes of *Les Deux Orphelines Vampires* (Two Orphan Vampires, 1997) and *La Fiancée De Dracula* (2002).

Rollin also co-wrote and provided padding shots for Bruno Zinzone's *Emmanuelle 6* (1987), probably the weakest of the official, Sylvia Kristel-initiated series (as opposed to all those illegitimate Italian knock-offs). He still harbours ambitions of getting together various unrealised dream projects, e.g. *Bestiality*, in which he wants Lahaie to star (no, it's not what you think... it's even wackier! Lesbian werewolves, yet!) or a long-projected version of the blood-drenched Elizabeth Bathory legend, which one would think should be a natural for ol' JR.

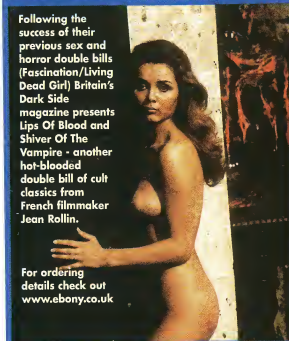
However these turn out (or don't), Rollin's unique legacy is assured. The body of work he has left us is either arty and idiosyncratic or self-indulgent and ham-fisted, depending on your viewpoint. Even his staunchest supporters wouldn't deny that his films are alternately too reliant on striking visuals or boringly talky. Yes, his ghastly gallic ghoulery is too often leavened with tomfoolery, with too many atmospheric build-ups dissipating in the unclocking of a laughable-looking vampire with a mouthful of joke-shop fangs, but just check out the (sometimes monotonous) regularity with which certain symbols, meaningless to us but obviously signifying something profound him (e.g., the squawking of seagulls at inappropriate moments, those constant trips back to Dieppe beach...) keep cropping up. Rollin is definitely, in the expression coined by his countrymen, an "auteur"... of sorts. His work has that certain "je ne sais crois"... but I'm buggered if I know what it is! •

STAKES THROUGH THE TART!



Following the success of their previous sex and horror double bills (*Fascination/Living Dead Girl*) Britain's Dark Side magazine presents *Lips Of Blood* and *Shiver Of The Vampire* - another hot-blooded double bill of cult classics from French filmmaker Jean Rollin.

For ordering details check out www.ebony.co.uk



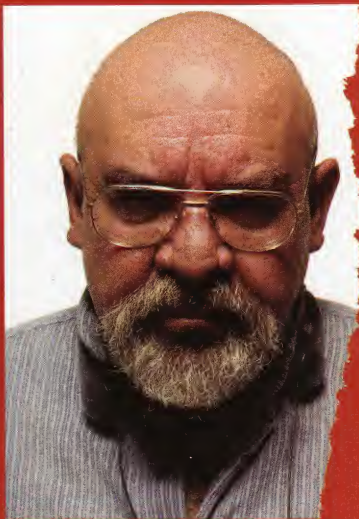
HERBERT WEST
HAS A GOOD HEAD
ON HIS SHOULDERS.
AND ANOTHER ONE
ON HIS DESK.



Shuart Gordon's
horror movies
include the classic
Re-Animator, plus
(bottom panel) *1-17*;
From Beyond,
Cradle Fresh and
King Of The Ants.



Calum Waddell
meets the director
of *Re-Animator*
and *From Beyond*
and chats to him
about his horror
'comeback.'



The return of Stuart GORDON

W

hen we last caught up with Stuart Gordon it was following the world premiere of his shattering *King of the Ants*. Gordon, alongside that film's star Chris McKenna, spoke in regards to this violent thriller, which – sadly – would fail to secure a theatrical release.

Nevertheless, Gordon has rebounded from his previous low budget shocker with, perhaps surprisingly, his most mainstream project to date. *Edmond* – which has just wrapped – is based on the David Mamet play of the same name and features a high profile cast led by A-list character actor William Macy. That the Oscar nominated Macy, who is red hot following his recent roles in such movies as *Cellular* and *The Cooler*, is to headline *Edmond* almost certainly secures the film a strong shot at box office success. Furthermore, with a supporting cast that includes Julia Stiles (also hot after her turns in *The Bourne Identity* and *Supremacy*) and *American Beauty* babe Mena Suvari, *Edmond* could well be Gordon's ticket out of lower budget productions.

Not that the director is done with horror, of course, and this candid chat – which took place over lunch in Los Angeles at the director's favourite Chinese restaurant (note: Gordon picked up the cheque – which was pretty damn cool) gives us news on all of his latest happenings. From a world exclusive on the upcoming *From Beyond* DVD to news of his *Masters of Horror* television episode and planned *Re-Animator* sequel, it is all here. Most interesting was Gordon's revelation that, "All of us horror directors are pussies!" – as he explained some of the movies that he has had to walk out on and an encounter that he had with Wes Craven when the *Scream* director bolted out of *Reservoir Dogs*. "I saw him in the toilet," explains Gordon, "And he said to me, 'I just couldn't take any more of that.'" Hard to believe that Gordon – not unlike Craven – could be scared of anything following the nightmarish visions that they have put on screen – but, terrified of their own shadow or otherwise, let us hope that these guys never stop disturbing our sleep. In the meantime, fingers tightly crossed that *Edmond* does well for one of the genre's most underrated talents.





dinner together.' It was one of the funniest dinners and everyone showed up – it was at a restaurant out in the valley and Guillermo Del Toro was there and there were some people at the next table and someone brought out a birthday cake to them. So Guillermo started singing Happy Birthday to them and he got us all to join in: at the table and when we finished Guillermo said, 'The Masters of Horror wish you a happy birthday' (laughs) and right afterwards he said, 'We did pretty good – maybe we should do a Christmas album.' So we kept getting together every couple of months and new people would come each time – David Cronenberg came along once, Bryan Singer and Rob Zombie and it expanded and got crazier and crazier. Out of that came the idea of doing a series of movies and it evolved from there. It turned out everyone had a pet project that they wanted to do – so here was the opportunity. We always have fun when we get together.

John Landis told me that his will be the first *Masters of Horror* episode – out of thirteen – to air. Do you know when yours is planned?

I think mine is the fifth and I believe they start airing in October – around Halloween, so mine will be the Christmas special (laughs).

Have you cast it yet?

I haven't started casting yet but I talked to the casting director and I expect we'll start within the next few weeks.

Talking about casting – the line up for *Edmond* boasts William Macy in the lead role, and he has to be one of the finest actors around...

Yeah, he is great and Julia Stiles is brilliant as well – once the word got out that we were making it, all these wonderful actors wanted to do it. We ended up with an amazing cast – we have Mena Suvari, Denise Richards, Joe Mantegna and George Wendt, my old buddy who was also in *King of the Ants*, is in it. Oh – and Jeffrey Combs has a part, so it really is a terrific cast.

So this is your biggest film to date...

Well in terms of the acting power it is incredible and everybody does a great job. Bill Macy is fantastic – he really has to carry the whole film and he is one of the most incredible actors that I have worked with.

How involved was David Mamet in the filming?

He was very involved. He came to the set to talk about it and he is an old friend of mine. Back in Chicago I produced and directed the very first professional production of his work, *Sexual Perversion in Chicago*. So I knew David from the beginning and it was great to work with him again. The script was just so great, it was one of those scripts where the more you read it the more you got out of it – it is very rich.

Taking aside *Edmond*, which I can tell you are really proud of, and obviously *Re-Animator* – do you have a favourite of your movies? Maybe one that has gone underappreciated?

I really don't – it is kind of like asking someone who their favourite kid is! I like them all for different reasons.

Although last time I spoke to you, you told me that you wish more people would check out your family film – *The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit*...



Left: Neil Wuhrer in *King of the Ants*, the creature from *Castle Freak* and (above) gore goblin from *Re-Animator*...

So you've just wrapped *Edmond*, right?

Yeah, we just finished shooting it. I think it is a great script and, in my opinion, the best thing that David Mamet ever wrote. In fact, they only finished performing it at the National Theatre last year. I think it is more relevant today than back when David originally wrote it – it is about a guy having a mid-life crisis who ends up murdering a young waitress.

You shot it around Los Angeles, is that correct?

I did, but I'm setting it in just a big American city – we're not really saying it is LA. It could just as easily be New York – and we tried to give it a New York feel even though it was shot in LA.

This is a real u-turn for you as well, because this is not in any way a horror film...

No it isn't, although it has some pretty horrible moments. I just saw the sequence, put together, where Julia Stiles gets murdered and it is just as horrific as anything in any of my other films. But, yeah, I think it is different. I like to surprise people and I think this movie will surprise everyone.

Even so, if *Edmond* is a big hit does this mean that you might move away from making horror films altogether?

Well I don't think that I am done with horror – there is always this line that keeps pulling me back (laughs). I love horror – and I have plans to do more, I will be doing an episode of *The Masters of Horror* for television and I have a few projects that I am working on just now that are definitely part of the genre.

What can you tell me about your episode?

It is called *Dreams in the Witch-House* and it is about a young guy, a student, who moves into the home of a 20th century witch. Of course she comes back and terrible things happen.

How did the whole *Masters of Horror* circle begin?

How it started was that Mick Garris organised a dinner for us which was a couple of years ago and there had been a documentary made by Universal called *The Masters of Horror*. It interviewed each of us and we didn't get a chance to meet each other, so Mick said, 'Let's all have

Right – now this was a movie that was based on a story by Ray Bradbury and I had done a production of it many years ago for a theatre company in Chicago and Joe Mantegna was in the original production. I stayed friends with Ray Bradbury ever since. Ray and I had spoken about doing it as a film and it turned out that Roy Disney was a big fan of the story and he had seen the play, so we were able to get Disney to produce it. It is the story of five down and out Mexican-Americans who spend their last 20 dollars buying a white suit, which they share. And it turns out that when they wear the suit their dreams come true – and it is not clear whether the suit itself is magical or if their image of themselves is improved when they wear it. So it is a wonderful pathos and really great fun.

Are you going to be directing a film called *Brew*, written by Jace Anderson and Adam Gierasch (screenwriters of *Toolbox Murders*)? They've been telling me a bit about it...

I've been talking to them about that, but it's not definite yet. I like the idea of it a lot – it's about two things that I really enjoy, which is zombies and beer (laughs). I would love to do it – I'm just waiting for a formal offer.

I saw *Dagon* again recently and I was shocked by how extreme some of it was – even by your standards. Did you have to cut anything out of it – or did you have problems with the ratings board? Well I tell you, I definitely agree with you – there are some moments that are pretty extreme. But, amazingly enough, I was never asked me to make a single cut in the entire film. I don't know – maybe they weren't paying attention or something. I cannot say – I'm not going to complain, but I did not have to do anything.

Presumably *Dagon* was a difficult film to sell to financiers...

Oh yeah – that movie was hard to get produced! It was not so much the gore that bothered people it was the concept of the film itself. Brian Yuzna and I were trying to get that film made for 16 years and every time we would say it was about people turning into fishes they would laugh and that would be the end of the meeting.

I found it really difficult to get into. But now I think it holds up really well to subsequent viewings – it's a film of yours that I find myself going back to...

Well thank you. That is how I judge if a movie is really good, you know – if I want to see it again. It is pretty crazy. I mean the concept is really nuts, but *Lovecraft* makes it believable somehow.

Were you always a fan of *Lovecraft*?

Yes I was, ever since I was a teenager when I began reading him. I thought he was great and I'm still a huge fan of his. There are still stories of his that I read and think would make a great movie – it is like a treasure chest of material.

Do you have any news in regards to a DVD release for *From Beyond*? Fans have wanted to see an

uncut version of this film ever since its truncated theatrical and video release...

Well there is a really happy story about that because around Christmas time I got a call from MGM who now own the rights to *From Beyond* and they told me they had just found something in their vaults. Then they asked me to come down and take a look at it. So I went down to the cutting room and there was a can of film that they had found, which had a little note pinned to it that read, 'This is for the video version of *From Beyond*.' Inside were all of the clips that the MPAA had made us take out of the movie. So we discovered them all. I thought they were lost – when people asked me if there would ever be a restored version of *From Beyond* I would say no because the material, as far as I knew, was lost and yet here it all was. It was wonderful. So we will be able to put it all back together. We are talking about putting it out at the end of this year or the beginning of next year.

(At this point dinner is served)

I have to mention in the text to this interview that we are eating a great Chinese meal, Stuart...

Yeah – and make sure that you mention that you are eating as well. I read all these interviews when people are having a meal and it says, 'He said this as he was jamming some food into his mouth', but they never mention that they are eating too.

Out of all the '*Masters of Horror*' I would say that your career most closely resembles *Tobe Hooper* in that both yourself and Tobe made an instant classic at the start and have been synonymous with it ever since. What have been the difficulties in escaping from the shadow of *Re-Animator*? What was hard about it – and first I should say it is a wonderful thing because it got us both started and we have been working ever since thanks to the success of these first movies – but it also becomes negative because every executive thinks that everything else you do is going to be exactly like *Re-Animator*. That was one of the reasons that I didn't want to do the sequels – I don't want to get that pigeonholed. I like doing horror films but I like doing other things as well, so it is mixed blessings I guess.

Now, Red Hen is the name of your own production company isn't it?

Yes, it is. *King of the Ants* was the first time that I got a production credit.

Is the studio Asylum, who produced *King of the Ants*, also involved in *Edmond*? I know they had the script in Cannes last year...

No, it didn't work out. We needed a bigger budget – and *King of the Ants* was about as big as they could go. They would like to have been involved but couldn't be.

They gave you almost a million for *King of the Ants*, is that right? No, it was way under a

million. In fact, *King of the Ants* was under half a million. It was shot on 35mm – it was shot on short ends, which means to be re-loaded every two minutes (laughs). That was a very cheaply made movie, though it turned out very well.

When I last spoke with you, you were hoping that *King of the Ants* might net a small theatrical run in the States – were you upset when that didn't happen?

Yeah, I was a little disappointed that it didn't get a cinema release. It's tough when you know you've made a good movie and you just can't seem to get it out there in front of a paying public.

But it got you great reviews...

Yeah, it got great reviews and I should be glad that people are seeing it in any form. I wanted to make that film for so long.

What about *House of Re-Animator*? You've mentioned that you might do that as well...

Well it's funny because I was just talking to Brian Yuzna this morning so that may well happen. We're still working on it.

And *House of Re-Animator* will be a political satire – right?

Well yeah – nothing can be more horrifying than politics, huh?

And you don't ever regret not doing *Bride of Re-Animator* or *Beyond Re-Animator* yourself?

No (Pauses)... Not really, because I always like doing something new. I got the idea for *House of Re-Animator* when Bush became President – I don't want to use the word 'elected' because he really wasn't – but all of these people started to show up in his cabinet that I thought had been dead for years (laughs). I thought, 'My God, someone must have re-animated them' – and then the idea just kind of hit me. I thought, 'That would make a great *Re-Animator* sequel.'

I presume you didn't shed any tears when The Pope died?

Actually I felt bad for The Pope. I had an argument with my wife about it, because obviously he held some controversial views, but he also helped to end communism in the former Soviet Union. I actually have a pretty funny story about The Pope.

You have to tell us about that...

Back when I was shooting *Castle Freak* we were in this... little town in Italy and in this town was one of the biggest discos in Europe. And this young town Priest, a Polish priest, was getting into trouble because he was going down there and he was being called 'The Disco Priest'. Now, I met him and what he said was, 'You have to go where the problems are', and there were all these problems going on – like drug dealers and fights, and he would hang out at the disco because that is where he felt he was needed. But there was this article in the newspaper about him and he got into trouble and he was called to the Vatican to see The Pope.

I saw him the morning that he was leaving and he told me, 'I am going to be seeing The Pope this afternoon – is there anything that you would like me to say to him?' and I was thinking of something and finally I said, 'Well ask him to bless our movie.'

So he goes off to The Vatican and I saw him later that night and it turned out that The Pope – after he explained what was his position was – actually patted him on the back and did not punish him at all. Then he said to me, 'By the way, The Pope brought you this' and he gave me a bottle of Polish vodka. So I thought, 'Wow this is kind of a nice present from The Pope' (laughs). •



The King Of CANNIBAL MOUNTAIN



**John Martin
interviews Sergio
Martino, the
legendary (and
very lucky)
exploitation
movie director
who got to smear
mud all over a
naked Ursula
Andress!**



LA MONTAGNA DEL DIO CANNIBALE

con ANTONIO MARSINA
Regia di SERGIO MARTINO

Mille Peccati... *Nessuna Virtù* is the title of Sergio Martino's first directorial outing. It could roughly be translated as **A Thousand Sins and no Virtue** - a title that according to Martino himself "could be emblematic of my career". This irony and slight lack of self-respect is where Martino's cinema turns enjoyable - being otherwise a decidedly commercial and sometimes-unscrupulous filmmaker. As I once mentioned Sergio Martino's name to an Italian actor named Marco di Stefano, he burst into laughter, "I once did a movie with him, that man loves money!" He continued claiming that Martino always directs his films with an ever-present cell phone in his hand - he has to call producers and sponsors to make those new deals... This devotion to commercial cinema does not necessarily have to be taken in a contemptuous way since one of the main achievements of Martino has been the ability to keep Italian genre cinema alive and being able to inject the popular with a creative cinematic talent.

Martino is undoubtedly one of those irrefutable Euro auteurs who worked in all the popular Italian genres of the seventies: the sex-comedy, the western, the crime film and not the least the giallo, the latter being a field in which Martino was perhaps only rivaled by the master Dario Argento. The gialli of Martino sometimes lack the psychological depth of Argento but makes up in sheer volume of visual excesses and convoluted plots. One of the best examples of this is **Tutto!**

the MOUNTAIN of the CANNIBAL GOD

Starring
URSULA ANDRESS-STACY KEACH-CLAUDIO CASSINELLI-ANTONIO MARISIA
Editor ALGENIO ALABIS Director of photography GIANCARLO FERRANDO
Story and Screenplay by CESARE FRUGONI & SERGIO MARTINO
Directed by SERGIO MARTINO

aka LA MONTAGNA DEL DIO CANNIBALE-THE SLAVE OF THE CANNIBAL GOD
PRISONER OF THE CANNIBAL GOD



Mountain of the Cannibal God



DVD World: Were you surprised to learn that Quentin Tarantino was one of your biggest fans?

Sergio Martino: When I first read his comments, yes! But after reflecting a lot on it, I realised that he was paying tribute to myself and also to a whole generation of Italian filmmakers who knew, above all, how to improvise, and use their imaginations to overcome restricted resources and shooting schedules. Tarantino started off in "low budget" cinema himself, so he appreciates only too well what it takes to get good results under these circumstances.

Are you aware of the increasing "cult" status of Italian genre films in America, England and Europe?

Yes, because with increasing frequency I'm hearing from journalists like you, who want to interview me about films I've made in the past. I hope that in the future

I'll get to make some more that will also be of interest to you! The present state of Italian genre cinema is, indeed, very sad. The cause of our decline has been the massive economical and technical superiority of Hollywood, which you can only fight with improvisation and imagination for so long. The investment sources that we used to have in Italy have just dried up. If we could get a million and a half dollars to make an action film, then perhaps we would again be able to get the attention of the international market, but there is no Italian producer in a position to risk such a sum. Perhaps the future lies with more European co-productions, though these bring difficulties due to differing languages and national taste.

Have you managed to keep making movies during these last few difficult years?

I've been offered opportunities to shoot a few films on which the budgets would have been disgraceful, so instead I've been concentrating on making TV series.

I believe that in the early days, you worked as an assistant to the great Mario Bava... How do you remember him, and what did you learn from him?

I worked on the shoot of Mario Bava's *The Whip And The Flesh* as a production assistant. I remember his technical ability, his expertise in constructing scale models and how skilfully he used lighting and camera positioning to make up for certain deficiencies in the acting department: He had previously worked as a cinematographer, so he knew that a shot of light or a

Colori del Buio (All the Colours of Darkness/Day of the Maniac) where Martino's most regular actress Edwige Fenech is tormented by a Satanic cult. A superb, illogic and appropriately "boculi" presentation is partly spoiled by a ludicrous ending which trivialises the once so claustrophobic narration. The film also featured some feminist touches as Fenech becomes involved in a living nightmare where a patriarchal society seemingly closes itself in on her. But these flashes of brilliance are never totally heartfelt, as the pressure of producers all too often forces Sergio to steer his films in another way - towards tired formulas and tedious happy-endings, such as in *Island of the Fishmen* (aka *Screamers*). This may also come from Martino's confessed light-hearted approach to dark subject matter: regarding his gall he claims in an interview that, apart from Argento, he is just joking with the genre (*Nocturna* magazine). However in one of his finest films, *Silent Action* (1976), Martino brings an intense direction to a great conspiracy-type plot, which ends on an unusually pessimistic note.

Sergio Martino, the son of a bank director, was introduced to the movie business as a child when he frequented the film sets of Genaro Righeili, who was his grandfather and director of the Italian sound film. In 1958, Martino made his debut as an actor in Sergio Corbucci's *I Ragazzi dei Parioli*, made when Martino started to work as an assistant director. His first film was in

the tradition of Mondo films - sensational "documentaries" with fake moral statements on the abominations of sex and violence in the human (and animal) world. Sergio then moved on to a successful series of sex and situation comedies. Many of these starred Italian sex kitten Edwige Fenech who at the time was married to Sergio's brother Lucio. Martino, a film producer who consequently produced many of his brother's films. One of the internationally best known comedies of Martino is *Sex With A Smile* (1976), an episodic film featuring Marly Feldman, Edwige Fenech and Tomas Milian. The seventies was Martino's best decade, and aside from the popular comedies he made the aforementioned giallo - a series of violent thrillers again often starring Fenech. The best known film of Martino in this genre is probably *Torso*. Then there are also some nice crime films, the satirical western *Man Called Blade* (aka *Martina*) and the adventure films *Mountain of the Cannibal God* and *Island of the Fishmen*. The former being part of the Cannibal genre and the latter a Fabio Fulci/Roger Corman homage/rip-off. In many of these cases Martino shows an affiliation with the classic American directors while still keeping a distinct Italian flavour. In many ways he could be compared to Howard Hawks, who just as Martino did not always care about the script. He prided himself on being able to take any script and by directorial power turn the film into his own.



"Part whodunit, part ghost story, and one of the most deliciously romantic horror pictures ever made."
— Tim Lucas, VIDEO WATCHDOG

MARIO QUAIN'S

WHIP AND THE BODY

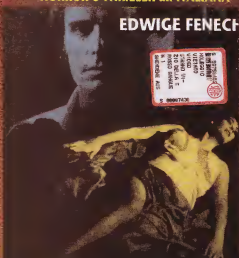
Christopher Lee • Dalilah Lavi
Tony Kendall

collezione

ROSSO SANGUE

HORROR e THRILLER all'ITALIANA

EDWIGE FENECH



STRANO VIZIO della SIGNORA WARDH

regia di Sergio Martino



Above: Mrs Ringo Starr meets a very silly monster in Sergio Martino's *Island Of The Fishmen*. Barbara Bach's career went downhill from here, and her fishy co-Star sank without trace too.

lower positioning of the camera could heighten the dramatic impact of a line. Also, he knew exactly what he wanted to shoot and would never shoot anything superfluous. If a film was to last ninety minutes, he would scarcely bother to shoot any more than that.



(Italy) and America... Così Macis, Così Violenta (1970). How do you remember them?

Extraordinary memories. These films allowed me, while very young, to live through unrepeatable experiences. This was the time of the youthful rebellion in 1968, the hippies, the anti-war movement, women's liberation and the first men on the moon.



You also worked in a genre, which is a descendant of the "mondo" documentaries, cannibal movies. How would you compare and contrast your *Mountain Of The Cannibal God* with the cannibal pictures of Umberto Lenzi and Ruggero Deodato?

I saw one of Deodato's films, though unfortunately I don't remember what it was called. It was made before mine, but it was trying for the same sort of ambience. I think Lenzi's films in this genre were made after mine, but I must confess that I haven't seen them. I think that between all of them

there was some affinity. Once one such film has been successful, the producers obviously want you to come up with something similar.

Did you, your cast and crew encounter any real dangers in the jungle?

The only problem was the wasps, really. I made *Mountain Of The Cannibal God* and *The Great Alligator* in Sri Lanka and Malaysia. The most effective jungle scenes were actually shot in the botanical garden of Kandy, in very comfortable circumstances. I remember though, shooting in the cave in *Cannibal God*. It was so hot and humid, even more so under the lights. In addition, we'd just had to climb 500 metres up a mountain!

Because she's such a big star, did you have problems convincing Ursula Andress to have all that crap rubbed all over her?

Ursula had already experienced quite a lot in life and made other films in the jungle, so she was not worried on that occasion, nor indeed in the scene with the python, which she insisted I shoot without using a double.

How do you respond to the

You also worked with Antonio Margheriti and Umberto Lenzi on some of their films...

I have very positive memories of them as two real pros, who had mastered the technical side of filmmaking.

Your earliest directorial credits were "mondo" efforts such as *Mille Peccati... Nessuna Virtù*.

I can understand the "cruelty against animals" charge, but the scene in which the python strangles the monkey, for instance, was shot almost by chance. Admittedly, the monkey was put next to the snake, but it had every opportunity to escape... there was nothing inevitable about it being killed.

change that such films are "racist" or "cruel to animals"?

Luciano: This is a first for me, but the things critics come up with never cease to amaze me. As far as I'm concerned, American adventure cinema of the 40s like *The King Solomon's Mines*, and other American and European adventure cinema inspired these films. I can understand the "cruelty against animals" charge, but the scene in which the python strangles the monkey, for instance, was shot almost by chance. Admittedly, the monkey was put next to the snake, but it had every opportunity to escape... there was nothing inevitable about it being killed. Anyway, in the jungle the law of life is the law of survival. I don't believe, moreover, that the makers of all these "unspeakable" nature documentaries we see on TV just shoot what they find. I think that many of their violent scenes of jungle life are contrived and reconstructed.

Were you surprised that your brother Luciano put some of your footage from *Mountain Of The Cannibal God* into Umberto Lenzi's *Eaten Alive*?

Not at all. It's the logic of commercial production. Would it be more just to shoot another scene of violence to animals? So it seems right to me to re-use the footage, as it suited the purposes of that film so well. I think it is all to his credit that he did this.

Is it more or less difficult working with a producer who is also your brother?

As with any other situation, there are both advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side I have managed to keep working in a field that is otherwise rather precarious, and I am allowed to make my films with a certain autonomy. The disadvantage is that, I've made so many films with my brother that other producers are less inclined to call me for their projects.

How would you define the term "giallo" and assess the Italian thriller's influence on the thriller genre internationally?

It's obvious that directors like Romero and De Palma have been influenced by their viewings of Italian gialli. In essence, these are thrillers based not only on the intricacies of uncovering the identity of the culprits, but also on the use - and, at times, misuse - of violent imagery. As for myself, the biggest influence on my own gialli has been Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques*.

I think that influence is very obvious in a film like *Your Vice Is A Locked Door*. What are your favourite and least favourite of your own entries in this genre?

My least favourite would certainly be *Murder In The Etruscan Cemetery*. My favourites are *All The Colours Of Darkness*, and my absolute favourite - the sequence at the end of *Torso* in which Suzy Kendall is locked in the room, being stalked by the killer. I think that I was very successful in generating a lot of suspense there. Suzy Kendall is an excellent actress, and at that time she was very bankable, internationally.

Do you agree with the assessment that *Torso* represents a transition from the stylish gialli of the '60s and early '70s to the brutal "splatter movies" that came later?

I don't really know how to answer that, because I don't recall the kind of films that were being made at the same time or just afterwards... in fact I followed *Torso* up with a comedy and two tearjerkers.

How did you find the experience of working with Carlo Ponti?

It was a very positive experience. There was a great deal of trust between us. I was then a very young director, and not particularly self-confident. It's fair to say that I became one of his pupils. Unfortunately we only made a few films together... three, and all successful. Soon after this, he had his tax problems, and could not work as a producer in Italy for a long time. A pity from my point of view, but above all for the Italian film business, because he was one of the most

sergio martino FILMOGRAPHY:

MILLE PECCATI... NESSUNA VIRTU' - 1969
BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN (LA BATTAGLIA DI EL ALAMEIN) - 1969
AMERICA NAKED AND VIOLENT (AMERICA COSI' NUDA COSI' VIOLENTA) - 1970
NEXT (LO STRANO VIZIO DELLA SIGNORA WARD) - 1971
DAY OF THE MANIAC (LO ALI THE COLOURS OF DARKNESS; TUTTI I COLORI DEL BUIO) - 1971
EXCITE ME (IL TUO VIZIO E UNA STANZA CHIUSA E SOLO IO NE HO LA CHIAVE) - 1972
THE SCORPION'S TAIL (LA CODA DELLO SCORPIONE) - 1972
ARIZONA SI SCATENO E IL FECE FUORI TUTTI (ARIZONA VUELVE) - 1972
TORSO (I CORPI PRESENTANO TRACCE DI VIOLENZA CARNALE) - 1973
GIOVANNANA COSI' ALUNGA DISONORATA CON ONORE - 1973
THE VIOLENT PROFESSIONALS (MILANO TREMA: LA POLIZIA VUOLE GIUSTIZIA) - 1973
THE VISITOR (CUGINI CARINATI) - 1974
GAMBLING CITY (LA CITTA' GIOCA D'AZZARDI) - 1975
MORTE SOSPETTA DI UNA MINORENNE - 1975
SILENT ACTION (LA POLIZIA ACCUSA IL SERVIZIO SEGRETO UCCIDE) - 1976
SEX WITH A SMILE (40 GRADI SOTTO IL LENZUOLIO) - 1976
LOVE IN FOUR EASY LESSONS (SPAGNAUCCI COSI' SENZA PUDOR) - 1977
MAN CALLED BLADE (MANNIAJA) - 1977
MOUNTAIN OF THE CANNIBAL GOD (LA SLAVE OF THE CANNIBAL GOD; LA MONTAGNA DEL DIO CANNIBALE) - 1978
GREAT ALLIGATOR (IL REUME DEL GRANDE CAIMANO) - 1979
ISLAND OF THE FISHMEN (LA SCREAMERS; L' ISOLA DEGLI UOMINI PESCE) - 1979
SATURDAY, SUNDAY AND FRIDAY (SABATO, DOMENICA E VENERDI) - 1979
THE WIFE ON HOLIDAY... THE MISTRESS IN TOWN (LA MOGLIE IN VACANZA... L'AMANTE IN CITTA') - 1980
SUGAR, HONEY AND HOT PEPPERS (LO ZUCCHERO, IL MIELE E IL PEPPERONCINO) - 1980
CORNETTI ALLA CREMA - 1981
WHAT IF YOUR WIFE HAD A COVER (SPAGHETTI A MEZZANOTTE) - 1981
MURDER IN THE ETRUSCAN CEMETERY (ASSASSINIO AL CIMITERO ETRUSCO) - 1982
ACAPULCO BEACH... TO THE LEFT (ACAPULCO, PRIMA SPIAGGIA A SINISTRA) - 1983
AFTER THE FALL OF NEW YORK - 1983
THE FOOTBALL COACH (L' ALLENATORE NEL PALIONE) - 1984
IF ALL GOES WELL WE'LL BE RUINED (SE TUTTO VA BENE, SIAMO ROVINATI) - 1984
EYE, EVIL EYE, PARSLEY AND FENNEL (OCCHIO, MALOCCHIO, PREZZEMOLO E FINOCCHIO) - 1984
HALF RIGHT, HALF LEFT (MEZZO DESTRO E MEZZO SINISTRO) - 1985
ATOMIC CYBORG (LA FISTS OF STEEL... AXA HANDS OF STEEL) - 1986
THE OPPONENT (also: BLOODFIGHT) - 1987
AFRICAN FEVER - 1989
AMERICAN RICKSHAW (also: AMERICAN TIGER) - 1989
CASABLANCA EXPRESS - 1989
A BEAR NAMED ARTHUR - 1991
THE GIRL OF THE MIMOSA (LA RAGAZZA DELLE MIMOSE) - 1993
CRAWING DESIRE - 1996





intelligent producers we ever had.

What did you think of the alterations that American distributors made to your films, e.g. Joseph Brenner with *Torso*, the way that *All The Colours Of Darkness* lost its opening nightmare sequence in America, and the way that more gore was added to *Island Of The Fishmen*?

For a long time, I was not even aware of this. I was later told that these changes were made to make the films more appealing to an American audience. It's not that the distributors found the content of these films below par, just that different audiences are looking for different things.

Murder In The Etruscan Cemetery and *Delitti Privati*, in their different ways, are "TV gialli." Is the genre suited to this medium?

In a TV series, which runs longer than a feature, it's more difficult to keep suspicion moving between the various characters. The plot must be much more intricate to hold the viewer's interest and persuade them to tune in next time. In the case of *Delitti Privati*, I think we managed this quite well.

Sergio Stivaletti worked on *Etruscan Cemetery* and other of your movies. How do you rate this FX man-turned-director?

He's a young man with a fantastic talent. I think that it's a good move for him to start directing, and I'm sure that he will be successful.

Giovanni Lombardo Radice from *Etruscan Cemetery* told me that he found you a very "cold" director, but later realised that you had made him give one of his best performances. Do you have a set way of working with actors?



by Sergio Martino

I corpi presentano tracce di violenza carnale

SALLY RENDALL - TINA AUMONT
LUC MERENDA
JOHN RICHARDSON
ROBERTO ROAZZO - ERNESTO COLLI
ANGELA CIOVELLO - CARLA BRAY
CRISTINA ARROLD - LUCIANO BARTOLI
CARLO ALBERTO
FEDERICA MANTON
DIRETTORE CASTING - SERGIO MARTINO
MONTAGGIO EDOARDO FERRARIO
MUSICA - ROBERTO NAPOLITANO
PRODOTTORE - ANTONIO TOSCANI
DISTRIBUTORE - ANTONIO TOSCANI

I think that the rapport between director and actors is determined, above all, by the quality of the story and by adherence to the truth of the characters' motivations. In giallo films, the stories are often very mechanical and the characters are moved not by true reactions to the situation, but by the necessities of moving the story along. For example, why, in giallo films, do so many beautiful and vulnerable girls sleep alone in sinister, isolated castles, instead of comfortable and secure hotels in the towns nearby?

Because otherwise, it would not be possible to generate any suspense. The characters are motivated by the will of the writer and the director. In this respect it is difficult to communicate to the actors how they should be interpreting their roles, when it's mainly a matter of mechanics. Perhaps my "cold attitude" towards actors in certain films was determined a little by my own natural timidity, but also from my awareness of the limitations on creative possibilities in these circumstances, where all you want from them is a routine "fearful" expression, or whatever. If Lombardo Radice believes that this brought out the best in him as an actor, so much the better.

Presumably you used international actors like Marty Feldman, for example, in *Sex With A Smile*, to try and make the Italian comedy a less domestic affair and more saleable abroad?

Yes, obviously. Marty Feldman in particular was a great comic. In fact, at this time Italian comedies did have a

certain amount of international success, and actors like Buzzanca and La Fenech became quite marketable.

Your cop films have often been criticised for being "fascistic"...

I remember that in Italy at the start of the seventies there were moves in parliament to disarm the police, and sociologists were arguing against putting people in prison. But the man in the street wanted strong, decisive action against crime. All the cop films of the time had this same theme, like the American films of Clint Eastwood and Charles Bronson - are they then, "fascistic"?

DVD Worlds In 2019: After The Fall Of New York, you tried to put a new slant on the hackneyed "After The Bomb" scenario, with Wagnerian allusions, and so on...

To be honest, although the Wagnerian tone is a suggestion that pleases me, I'm not sure how intentional it was. Sometimes these things just happen.

What are your memories of the westerns you made?

Arizona Si Scoteno was my first non-documentary film. I remember with nostalgia how green I was in those days. I think that with *A Man Called Blade* I made a good film with some beautiful sequences, though it came a little too late in the great "spaghetti western" cycle. I always enjoyed American westerns and so it was a type of filmmaking I was very fond of. I wish I had had the opportunity to make more of them.

What can you tell us about your 1993 film *Craving Desire*, with the lovely Serena Grandi?

It's a film that I was able to make after the TV success of *Delitti Privati*. Serena did play a part in that film, though the star was Vittoria Belvedere. Serena had already played some "mild" roles for me at the beginning of her career, so I knew very well how good she was. Of course, she is also much underated because of the kind of sexy roles she plays.

Edwige Fenech is another cult favourite. She was announced as starring in the sequel to *Island Of The Fishmen* but she wasn't in it, why?

It's a kind of fairytale that uses repertory: footage from *Island Of The Fishmen* and 2019. La Fenech did not appear in the film, because at the last moment she decided that she couldn't face wearing a heavy costume in the equatorial climate that we would be shooting in. I think that she made the right decision, though it was a shame not to work with her.

Why do you prefer to use two American-sounding pseudonyms ("Martin Dolman" and "Christian Plummer") instead of the customary one?

The name "Plummer" was used only for the abridged version of *Etruscan Cemetery*, the feature that we "salvaged" from the TV series. At this time there were so many films by "Martin Dolman" on the market, we thought that another pseudonym was in order, so as not to devalue the name. ●

WHERE THERE'S MUCK, THERE'S BRASS!

The undisputed maestro of high class erotica, Tinto Brass talks to DVD World about why false todgers are better than the real thing!

generous budget, as it's one of the most important factors in erotic cinema. Eroticism is a language issue; the more resources you have, the more search for style you can make. Having the money buys you sexier costumes, better actors, more interesting sets and locations. I am not interested in filming a hardcore movie in five days and sitting back while the actors just f**k and make blow jobs...

Q: We understand you have pioneered the use of prosthetic penises in your movies. Why don't you just use the real thing?

A: If the penis is not real, my male characters can display an erection but technically the film is not hardcore. You see?

Q: Some critics say that most of your films consist of three elements: sex, violence and pornography. Do you agree?

A: There is sex, no doubt. Violence is never present in my films, and about the third element, pornography - I can say that is a language issue. It's necessary to understand what pornography means because it has to be considered a negative word when every time we talk about sex we are making pornography. In fact pornography means a trading based on sex. Today, pornography is something obscene, dirty, negative, opposite to the more elegant eroticism, with its inherent poetry. As I said before, I am not interested in just filming people f**king.

Q: What do you think of censorship?

Tinto Brass is one of the most genuinely erotic film-makers working in cinema. He is a household name in his native Italy where he is known simply as 'Il Maestro'. Tinto is a man hopelessly in love with women and his films are a passionate eulogy to the female form. He is revered by thousands of beautiful young women who long to appear in one of his movies (a much coveted role is considered to be the equivalent of becoming a supermodel). We were fortunate enough to track him down for this brief Q&A session...

Q: You're famous for your expensive erotic epics like *Caligula*, *Salon Kitty* and *The Key*. Do you think a big budget helps make them sexier?

A: There is no argument. I have always fought to work with a

Tinto suffers through another boring day at the office in *PO Box*: Tinto Brass



Scenes from Tinto's latest horny hit, *Black Angel*...





Tinto attends to some last minute costume adjustments while filming *The Voyeur* (also below)

There is sex, no doubt. Violence is never present in my films, and about the third element, pornography - I can say that is a language issue.

A: Censorship is humiliating, not only to the ones who receive it but also for the ones that decide it. Who has the right to decide anyway? I should be the censor, then our society would be a much better place...

Q: Have you ever used a pseudonym?

A: No. I've never used pseudonyms, because I've never wanted to hide myself behind a mask. In fact Tinto Brass launched *sex* and doesn't pull his punches. I did remove my name from *Caligula* though, because the film was re-edited against my wishes. I am now only credited as 'Director of principal photography...'

Q: Can you tell us something about one of your most personal films, *PO Box Tinto Brass...*?

A: This is a very sexy film. It's very fresh, based on letters that women have written to me personally. This film is a mirror of today's society. It isn't pretentious, but undoubtedly it is a real image of the feminine erotic fantasy, which to my mind is vastly superior to the masculine one.

Q: You choose very beautiful women for your films. Many people say that the face is the mirror of the soul. Is it like this for you?

Tinto: No. The ass is the real mirror. Show me your ass and I can tell you who you are!



BRASS ON SILVER DISC!

The UK DVD releases of *Black Angel*, *P.O. Box* Tinto Brass and *The Voyeur* are 'Il Maestro' at his very best.

Black Angel (aka "Senso '45") sees Tinto Brass revisiting the Second World War period setting and Nazi iconography of his highly acclaimed 1976 magnum opus *Salon Kitty*. Boasting the biggest budget ever for a Tinto Brass production, *Black Angel* is a sumptuously presented tale of burning sexual passion inspired by Camillo Boito's novella, *Senso*, previously filmed in 1954 by Luchino Visconti. The stunning Anna Galiena stars as Livia Mazzoni, the beautiful wife of high ranking German ministry official, Carlo (Antonio Salines). It is 1945, and with the war and fascism coming to an end, Livia is travelling from Asolo to Venice to meet her secret lover Helmut Shultz (Gabriel Garko), a lieutenant in the SS. Travelling in the car of lawyer Ugo Oggiano (Franco Branciaroli), an ardent admirer of Livia's and her husband's informer, Livia begins to vividly relive the high points of the devastating sexual abandonment that has shaped her life. A visually arresting masterpiece of erotica with a dramatic symphonic score by Oscar-winning composer Ennio Morricone.

The Voyeur concentrates on Dodo, a young university professor - Sylvia, his beautiful and sensual wife who mysteriously disappears at odd times - Alberto, his roughish and lustful father and Fausta, Alberto's brazen uninhibited nursemaid.

Dodo is the voyeur of the title reliving various telling moments



A Film by Tinto Brass, starring Claudia Koll

of his sex life through a series of erotic flashbacks, trying to understand his wife's absences and bizarre sexual needs. He also observes the night-time habits of his father and his maid which, although finding them shocking, he cannot resist any more than he can help witnessing the totally liberated dalliances of his dusky student Pascasio.

This film is beautifully shot in lavish colours and filled with the Tinto Brass hallmark rich, exotic backdrops. Throughout Europe, *The Voyeur* is acknowledged as his most erotic

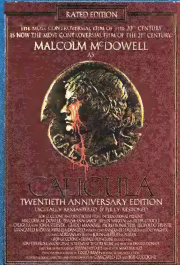
film to date and has become a classic of the genre since its original release in 1993. *P.O. Box* Tinto Brass is a sensational collection of real-life sexual fantasies. A huge theatrical

and video hit throughout Europe, it's a sumptuous feast for the eyes and the senses and a breathtaking celebration of female sexuality. Over the years, Tinto Brass has received thousands of unsolicited letters, photos and videos from female fans, all recounting their most intimate sexual fantasies. In *P.O. Box* Tinto Brass he presents many of these exciting, explicit and uninhibited fantasies on screen, giving the viewer more stunning girls, more thrills, more shocks, more eroticism (and more sexy lingerie) than ever before in one movie.

Only one movie dares to show the perversion behind Imperial Rome, and that movie is Tinto's *Caligula*, the epic story of Rome's mad emperor. All the details of his cruel, bizarre reign are revealed: his unholy sexual passion for his sister, his marriage to Rome's most infamous prostitute, his fiendishly inventive means of disposing of those who would oppose him, and more. The combined talents of cinematic giants Malcolm McDowell, Peter O'Toole, John Gielgud and Shakespearean actress Helen Mirren, along with an acclaimed international cast and a bevy of beautiful Penthouse Pets, make this unique historical drama a masterpiece of the screen. Not for the squeamish, not for the prudish, *Caligula* will shock and

arouse you as it reveals the deviance and decadence beneath the surface of the grandeur that once was Rome. The region 1 US disc is available both in rated (soft) and unrated (hard) editions.

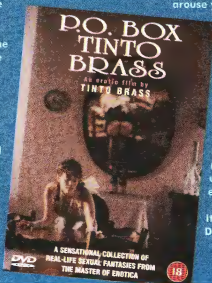
All Ladies Do It is the story of Diana. She is



happily married to Paolo, but due to her extraverted character, she regularly winds up in short-lived adventures, which she doesn't keep hidden from Paolo. On the contrary, by telling him, their sexual relationship is fuelled with fresh impulses. When Diana experiences a stormy affair with the poet Aphonse, who is obsessed with a particular portion of a woman's anatomy, Paolo gets jealous after all. He rejects Diana, who responds by indulging in a series of sexual excesses with her sister and some friends. This is available on a region free US disc.

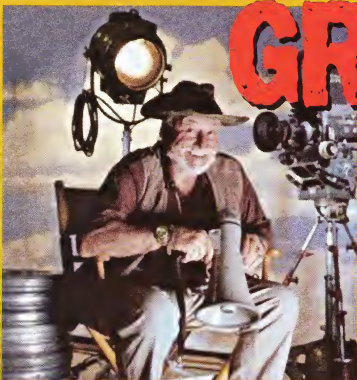
Finally, no Tinto collection would be complete without *Salon Kitty*. Set in Berlin, 1939, at the dawn of WWII, power-mad SS Officer Wallenberg is ordered to find and train Germany's most beautiful women to work in a brothel. Here these Nazi nymphs will submit to the bizarre passions and carnal degradations of the Reich's highest ranking men and women while Wallenberg secretly records their acts for blackmail. But when an innocent young prostitute uncovers the conspiracy, her revenge will ignite a holocaust of pain, pleasure, and shocking sexual perversion.

Salon Kitty's on DVD from Blue Underground in the USA - on a region free 2-disc set that's packed with extras. ■



THE CORPSE

GRINDER!



Legendary filmmaker Ted V. Mikelis gave us *The Corpse Grinders* and *The Astro-Zombies*. He also provided the "inspiration" for *Charlie's Angels*, which is even more horrific! DVD World meets one of the movie world's few originals...

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota and raised in Portland, Oregon, Ted Vincent Mikelis studied for a degree in psychology but dropped-out in 1950 in favour of travelling around the United States and earning a living as a magician. From the age of 15 to 22, he claims that he performed magic shows, ventriloquism, accordion solos (blindfolded with gloves on) and an acrobatic act - all in two and half hours. He also played with fire eating and boasts that he "never singed a whisker."

Later on Mikelis developed a taste for a different kind of illusionism - film-making. He reaped financial rewards with the phenomenal *The Corpse Grinders*, and went on to live in a huge castle, complete with many "castle ladies" in Glendale, California. Nowadays he lives in a somewhat less extravagant one-storey Paradise Valley home, a place that is swamped with technical equipment and props from all his movies. Mikelis is also an extremely popular college lecturer on film. His large classes start at noon and have been known not to end until the following day - and he says that not one pupil has ever played truant.

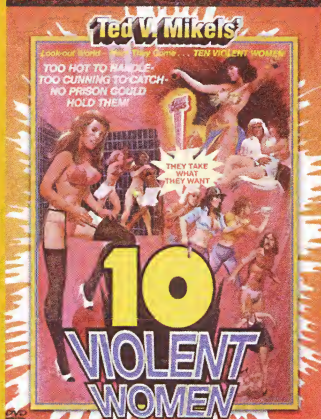
Ted Mikelis is 75 years of age, but it would appear that he still has the physique of a 20-year-old, coupled with the wisdom of Merlin the sorcerer. He has 6 children and 23 grandchildren

from a previous relationship, and he claims that his energy comes from 60 years of gruelling weight-lifting workouts, which he continues to this day, three times a week.

"I got into films when I was in my teens," says Ted, "I would write a story and say to all the local people that I had acting parts for them. We would film our little movie at weekends, but this was a long time ago. However, that was the very start of my movie career and I did that for ten years before making full features. These little experimental films that I made were all text book movies. For me, it was a way I could learn the craft of film-making. And it was fun. You know, it was the hands-on academy of film-making when I was a young lad - and that was a long time ago!"

Ted's big breakthrough came some years later - in 1971 - when he made a choice little movie called *The Corpse Grinders*, a cheapie horror comedy about a pair of hoodlums who hit upon the ingenious idea of selling corpses to a cat food factory, where they are put through a rickety grinder (that looks like it's made of cardboard) and emerge the other end as cat mince. "I look at *The Corpse Grinders* as a funny film about two guys trying to make money by grinding-up human cadavers and selling them as food for 'Cats Who Like People,' he smiles. "There's nothing nasty about it. For me, that is funny!"

CULT CINEMA COLLECTION





"Well, it was absolutely too gory," he explains. "If you were a student surgeon and wanted to see how a spleen was cut

out, then the first version of the film would be the one to see. I don't think such footage belonged in a film that was of entertainment value. Camp is one thing, as seen in *The Corpse Grinders* - grinding bodies into cat food is a joke!"

The grinding machine appears to be made from cardboard and paper, but Ted insists it was well-built, "with large lawnmower blades and a conveyor belt that I got from a grocery store. And there were flashing lights and moving parts such as a bicycle wheel and gears. I forgot how I created the sound effects, because in my films, I invent and create the sounds - everything that you can hear! I think I joined more than one sound to get that grinding."

"The most expensive item on *The Corpse Grinders*, and remember that I had no money to make the film, was to buy hamburger meat which was mixed with sawdust. This would make the meat resemble ground-up flesh that would then become human mince. In those times, hamburger meat cost a dollar a pound and that was a lot of money for my little budget (laughs). I was lucky to have an electrical wizard who constructed the grinder with plywood. He bought the lawnmower blades from The Salvation Army for two dollars and made the flashing lights. Looking back, the machine cost 17 dollars to make! (laughs). If I could again make a picture that would gross so much more at the box office than it cost to make, I wouldn't retire, but I could make some very expensive movies. *The Corpse Grinders* was phenomenal. It did so much business, but truthfully it was the excellent sales campaign that sold the film."

Even now, Ted finds it hard to believe how big a success the movie was. "At one point, it reached no. 11 in the American box office charts," he says. "Isn't that amazing to have that little no-budget movie reach that high? I'll never be able to do that again. By today's standards, it would have grossed over 100 million dollars. In the early 70s, a cinema ticket would cost 25 cents and not 10 dollars like it is now. I remember that when we shot the film, I lived in a castle that had 26 rooms. Most of the film was shot in my home - even the cemetery sequence was lensed in my back yard. I still have several mannequins that were used in the film as victims. Plastic arms and legs are strewn all over the place!"

As well as directing, editing, writing and shooting his films, Ted is also the

man who finds the money to get them made. "I've produced and shot *Apartheid Slave-Women's Justice*, *City in Terror*, *Dimension in Fear* and *Mission: Killfast* - all from my own pocket. I have no problem in finding people who want to help me make my films, in front of and behind the camera."

One of his more controversial productions, acquired from another director for distribution, is the ultra-gripsy *Undertaker and His Pals*, a film that originally featured real human autopsy footage. Mikelis removed this footage when the film became part of a very popular double-bill with *The Corpse Grinders*.

"Well, it was absolutely too gory," he explains. "If you were a student surgeon and wanted to see how a spleen was cut out, then the first version of the film would be the one to see. I don't think such footage belonged in a film that was of entertainment value. Camp is one thing, as seen in *The Corpse Grinders* - grinding bodies into cat food is a joke. It's sawdust and meat coming out of a wooden box - how can anyone take that seriously? But surgery and autopsy footage is not a joke, especially when you see a stomach being opened so that ulcers can be cut off."

Ted worked with Russ Meyer favourite Tura Satona on two of his films: *The Astro-Zombies* and *The Doll Squad*. "I seem to recall that *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* was her acting debut before starring in my two films," he muses, "and let me say that Russ Meyer was not heavy on Satona when it came to her performance. Her role in Meyer's film was physical, whereas for *The Astro-Zombies* it was to be dramatic. She was to play *The Dragan Lady*, and I put her through two months of drama and voice lessons because she had this certain Chicagoa wang."

"Recently, Satona sent me a beautiful Christmas card, and so did her daughter Kalini. Satona is still a very beautiful woman, although nowadays, she has physically changed in stature. Her granddaughter, Danae Davis, was the main camera operator on another of my films, *Apartheid Slave-Women's*



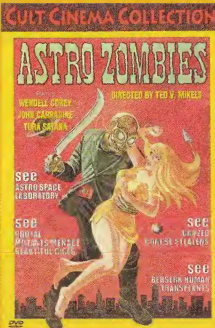
AN ELITE ARMY OF FEMALE ASSASSINS...
IN A RACE AGAINST TIME AND DEATH TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM
HIDEOUSLY DIABOLICAL MASS DESTRUCTION AT THE HANDS OF A
MADMAN NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN!

Ted V. Mikelis'

THE DOLL SQUAD



WIDESCREEN SPECIAL EDITION



Justice, and at 19 years old, will make her own feature films. She has already won an award for a very good short called *Lust Angeles*.

The *Astro-Zombies* was Ted's first sci-fi horror film. "I wrote the screenplay in 1960 and it was originally meant to be serious, and not campy as it turned out," he chuckles, "I wanted the audience to believe that the astronaut in training in the opening scene, was a real person, until his 'buddy' ripped-off his head revealing an experimental dummy. Anyway, investors wanted a campy film and that's what they got."

"I had this idea that the US government was dropping their most brilliant and highly educated astronauts by parachute into every American state. From there on, the astronauts constructed bomb shelters as at the time, it was believed that there would be a nuclear war between America and the former Soviet Union. After the planet had been devastated by atomic bombs, the dug-in astronauts recreated the government and began to experiment."

In those times, there was no such thing as organ transplants. I wrote these scenes of fictional medical surgery and decided to communicate with the government. They were somewhat surprised, and replied that they were beginning to experiment on heart transplants. What is strange that I had already envisioned such science for the film although it didn't exist at that time. Wayne Rogers from *M*A*S*H* wanted to be involved in the film, thinking it would be fun and we all received 37,000 dollars to make *The Astro-Zombies*. Of course, everyone made something out of it except me. To this day, I have yet to receive a cent for directing, writing, producing, editing and supplying the equipment."

He also got zilch for providing the basic idea for *Charlie's Angels* when

he made a movie called *The Doll Squad*. "I'm still bitter about that," he sighs. "When they made *Charlie's Angels* four years later, they took the name of my *Doll Squad* leading lady, Sabrina, and the total concept. Charlie was the name of my senator. A lot of my films were copied, even Saylent Green copied *The Corpse Grinders*, where people are processed into food. *The Doll Squad* was fun to make. I did break some new ground. None of the girls knew any karate, with the possible exception of Tura Satana. Bruce Lee had not come onto the American scene yet, and I had to fight with the sound mixers to make ample sound on the hits, kicks, etc. Since I had only one stunt-man, I had to take off my director's cap and take the hits and kicks from the girls to show the actors how to do it. I ended up in the cut because the hits and kicks to me were filmed and looked more real. So the girls took out their frustrations on me, then I'd jump up and direct again."

As for machine guns, I only had two weapons that fired blanks, and I only had them for a few hours after dark for one night only. I'd hand a girl a gun, tell her to run in and fire, and she'd ask me, 'At who?' I'd say not to worry about it, just run in and fire. I grabbed dozens of shots, making up an imaginary battle scene, with men and girls from the *Doll Squad* running every which way. Talk about editorial challenge in the editing room. What fun!

"There was no script for the action scenes and dialogue was made up on the spot. I put the killer with the patch over his eye, Herb Robbins, in a closet whilst working out the blocking on the set of a huge cave and forgot I'd left him there. The door was up against his nose, and thirty minutes later he opened the door very s-l-o-w-l-y wondering if it was time for him to come out yet. He was trying to

kill Sabrina, but she killed him. Again, we only had so many uniforms for the military bad guys. After each uniform had holes shot out covering the front, and the back, they could only be worn as a dead man on the ground. As always, every guy was shot at least four or five times, front, back, sideways, you name it."

Herb Robbins went on to direct his own, almost unwatchable movie called *The Worm Eaters*, and Ted stepped in to distribute it! "My financial consultant and myself were of the film's first screening at 20th Century Fox," he recalls. "After the film had finished, we were walking back home and my consultant stopped, put his hands on my shoulders and said, 'Ted, is there any way you can get your name off this movie?' He thought that *The Worm Eaters* would damage my name as a filmmaker! At the time, I was going through a difficult stage in my life, not knowing what to do. I met Herb Robbins who had always wished to direct a movie and had written a story where people ate worms. I said, 'Okay Herb, if we can show people actually putting worms in their mouths and then eating them, that is unusual enough to warrant its making.' I put up the money, although it took me over eight years to get it all back."

Ted has made so many movies that to discuss them all would take a very long time indeed. He's not finished yet, either, having recently started production on *Mark of the Astro Zombies*. So does he have a particular favourite? "Only one film!" he says. "All have been



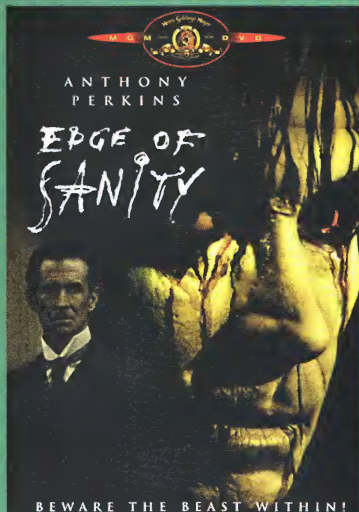
a creative challenge and a pleasure to make. But if I had to take one movie it would be *The Doll Squad*. It features lots of pretty girls and Nicholas Carras' score won a Academy Award nomination for the top ten scores but didn't make it to the final cut - that's something else! I have always thought of making a sequel to *The Doll Squad* but the original girls are now too old. One of the babes, Francine York, wants to be the mother of the proposed new breed of doll squad. If I film *The Doll Squad 2*, I would probably use black girls so that it was different, especially if they came from all over the world."

The Ted V. Mikels Collection is available on NTSC DVD from Image Entertainment

TOWERS OF Terror



They seek him here... they seek him there. We found him! As *Blue Underground* release a box set of his movies, legendary producer Harry Alan Towers talks exclusively to Allan Bryce about his long career turning muck into brass!



Harry Alan Towers is a pretty crafty guy, the sort of fellow who can hide behind a spiral staircase and watch *Wuthering* without moving his head. The story goes that in the late 60s he was in the middle of shooting a sleazy low-budget epic called *House Of 1000 Dolls* on location in Spain. A visitor to the set enquired exactly how a character he had spotted in a stovepipe hat with a beard and a wart on his face fitted into the action. Towers explained that to get permission to film in the country he had been forced to submit a script to the Spanish censors. Realising they would take a dim view of *Dolls* – a sordid tale of white slavery – he concocted an alternative screenplay entitled *Abel Lincoln In Illinois*, which passed their approval. But of course he had to have an Abel Lincoln there just in case the censor called in to check on him!

There are many other Towers stories that have since entered into legend, including his alleged involvement with one of the biggest political scandals of the 60s, but sadly most of them impossible to discuss here without chancing a few lawsuits. Suffice it to say that this man has led a rich and colourful life!

He was born in London in October 1920, started out as a child actor, became a prolific radio writer during WW2, and was appointed head of the Overseas Broadcasting Services. After the War he went on to form his Towers Of London organisation, which pioneered the international syndication of transcribed radio programmes.

Then, with the coming of commercial television, Towers headed the British ATV Company and was the programme

director of the first London Weekend Programme Contractor. He went on to enter the field of independent television production and was responsible for such successful shows as *Dial 999*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Tales From Dickens*. Then in 1962 he became a film producer with a minor 'B' picture called *Invitation To Murder*. Since then he has produced countless other pictures, often scripting them himself under the pseudonym of Peter Welbeck – the surname being the name of the pre-War phone area code for his West End address.

Towers' extensive credits in the horror and exploitation area include four Christopher Lee movies that have just been released as a box set by *Blue Underground*: *Circus Of Fear* (1965), *Castle Of Fu Manchu* (1967), *Blood Of Fu Manchu* (1967) and *The Bloody Judge* (1971). He's also made pictures like *Venus In Furs* (1970), *Count Dracula* (1970), *Fanny Hill* (1971), *Gor* (1985), *The Edge Of Sanity* (1989), *Howling W* (1989) and *Phantom Of The Opera* (1991).

Towers has rarely been interviewed over the years. He spends most of his time in Canada when not jetting round the world making movies, but we managed to catch up with him at his London apartment, located just round the corner from Broadcasting House. The place is a cleaning lady's nightmare, a treasure trove of musty old books and press clippings. A plaque reveals that George Orwell died on the same site – possibly of claustrophobia!

It was early in the evening when I arrived – about 7.30 – but my host

the door in poems. He explained that it helps me to relax during interviews. I suppose that with his background he has earned the right to be just a little bit eccentric.

DVD World: You certainly have a particular knack for producing horror movies. Why is that?

Harry Alan Towers: The good thing about a horror film is that if you don't sell then nobody bothers about how much it costs. Most of the horror films I have been associated with have made quite a lot of money. Erotic movies are the same, though you can sometimes get into censorship troubles there... I used to get around this by shooting alternative versions of my films for the foreign markets. That's unnecessary today. It's not worth the trouble.

Back in the 60s I did that with films like *The Brides Of Fu Manchu*. The girls took their tops off in the version that played on the continent. The *Fu Manchu* films were always very popular. The rights are back with us now, and if this DVD box set proves successful, who knows? We might do some more for television. The real problem with *Fu Manchu* is that he is an archetype villain, and it's very difficult to do a TV series with a villain as a leading man. Secondly, I personally believe that you have to do *Fu Manchu* in period. You can't have a Chinaman like him with those long nails flapping around in the contemporary world.

DVD World: Did you make a lot of money from the *Fu Manchu* films?

Harry: I did quite well. The first three in the series were very successful. But the fourth and fifth – the ones that are in the DVD set – were not. That was because they were directed by a little Spaniard called Jess Franco. When I looked at the last one he did, I said 'Jess, you have succeeded in doing something that nobody else has achieved.' 'What's that?' he asked. 'Killing *Fu Manchu*,' I said. Franco is of course still directing movies. Gerald Kikoine, who made *Edge Of Sanity* for me, started as an editor for Jess Franco. I tend to pick up these rather weird characters and exaggerate the depths of their talent. Somebody once said that Jess Franco was a jazz musician who played the trombone until he discovered the zoom lens...

DVD World: Franco is something of a cult figure these days.

Harry: Goodness knows why! I saw one of his movies recently and he's still got that habit of zooming in and out with the camera for no discernible reason. Franco has many different names but he always delivers the same film. He made one big

hit movie for me, called *99 Women*. I must tell you how that came about. I had done a picture called *The Million Eyes Of Su-Muru*, which was about a female *Fu Manchu* character

played by Shirley Eaton. This was reasonably successful, so I did a deal to do a sequel to that. I had Franco in Brazil at that time, so we set the sequel there and planned to finish it up with footage from the carnival in Rio.

Now Jess, with all his zooming about, always finished very quickly – usually in time to have a long lunch. Anyway, on this occasion he actually finished filming a whole week before the carnival, so all the cast and crew were just sitting around. I couldn't stand to see this and, so, literally over the weekend, I wrote a script called *99 Women*, a sexy women's prison picture. There were only actually three women in it, but we hoped that people wouldn't notice.

The story was that these three girls were escaping through the jungle. We cast my wife (actress Maria Raimi), and two other actresses and we went to a botanical park about thirty minutes from Copacabana beach and shot for six days. We came home with one third of a movie, which I showed to some producer friends of mine. They agreed to finish the movie off in Alicante with my old friends Herbert Lom, Maria Schell and Mercedes McCambridge, who played the sadistic woman governor. We shot for three weeks in Alicante and we had a movie.

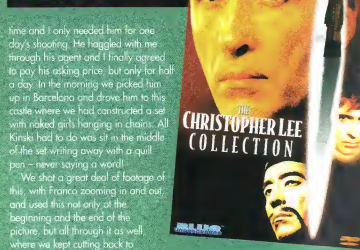
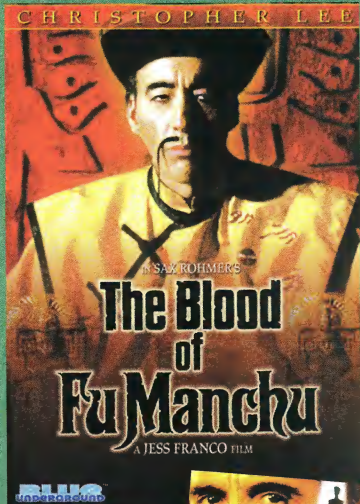
I remember coming out of a projection theatre on the Champs Elysees with a distributor friend and he said, 'I smell money.' He was right. That picture cost less than a quarter of a million dollars, and it went on to become the biggest grossing picture in America for three weeks. Unfortunately, the company for which I made it had got into all sorts of stupid adventures and went bankrupt. But that was Jess Franco at his best, his moment of greatness. I still like him a lot as a person, he's a nice little man.

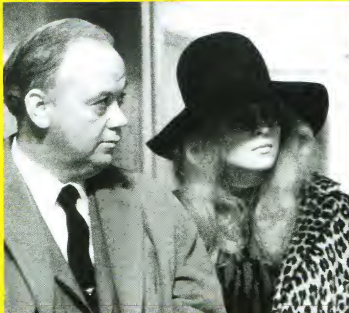
While we're on the subject of Franco, he made quite a good erotic picture for me based on the Marquis De Sade's *Justine*, with Maria Power, who was the daughter of Tyrone Power, and a very good cast: Jack Palance, Mercedes McCambridge, Alim Tamiroff, Sylva Koscina and Klaus Kinski.

Kinski never forgave me for that picture. He made many films for me later, but he was rather hot stuff in Italy at the



"I tend to pick up these rather weird characters and exaggerate the depths of their talent. Somebody once said that Jess Franco was a jazz musician who played the trombone until he discovered the zoom lens..."





Top: Harry relaxes on the set of *The Million Eyes Of Su-Mura* with actor George Nader. Middle: With his wife Maria Rohm. Right: Joking with Jack Palance while filming *The Shape Of Things To Come!*



Kinski, putting the Marquis De Sade's words over the top, dubbed by an actor who sounded like Kinski. The picture opened with over Germany hitler as "Shining Xmas-Kinski" and he was funny because he had only been paid for half a day.

DVD World:

What other memories do you have of working with Kinski?

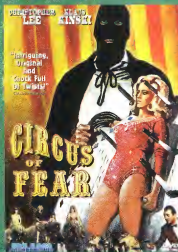
Harry: I did a version of *Count Dracula* in 1970 that was directed by Jess Franco and starred Christopher Lee. I wanted Kinski to play Renfield in this one, the guy who eats the flies. But he wouldn't do it, so I did the deal with his agents and persuaded them not to tell him the name of the picture he would be working on. He turned up for the first day's shooting and went straight into a scene where he had to strangle a girl, who was played by my wife. After the cameras stopped turning he looked at me and said, "Why do I feel I am in a Dracula picture?"

I remember another time when he came over to England to do a film for me in the 60s, it was *Circus Of Fear*, which is in the Blue Underground DVD set. He had a scene where he got shot and fell to the floor and died. When the time came to film the scene, Kinski pirouetted, fell down, coughed blood, got up, pirouetted again, died a third time, got up and pirouetted again before finally collapsing. And the English director, a fellow named John Moxey, said "Thank you very much Mr. Kinski. Would you mind doing a second take, perhaps a little shorter?" And Kinski pulled himself up to all of his five-foot-nothing and said "Yes I would. I've died in more 17 "king movies than you've directed." He was right, of course.

DVD World: Do you have any favourites among your own movies?

Harry: The early *Fu Manchu* films, particularly *The Face Of Fu Manchu*. In more recent times I was very pleased with my remake of *Phantom Of The Opera* with Robert Englund. I also have a fondness for *Ten Little Indians*. I've done that story four times now. Same script, different locations. Always kill off your most expensive stars first.

DVD World: Another of your movies that turned up on DVD recently was *The Edge Of Sanity*, a Jekyll and Hyde tale



starring Anthony Perkins. What do you recall of them?

Harry: It was done pretty quickly. We shot a weekend in Clapham and the rest in Budapest, with a French director. I had high hopes for that picture, but it didn't work out quite as well as I thought it would. I personally would have preferred to

make the whole movie in England, but of course it would have been another million dollars on the budget at the time. So we chose the compromise. We had a very imaginative French art director - but I don't think he had a very good sense of period (chuckles).

Many people brought up the fact that the film was supposed to be set in Victorian London, yet some of the characters were dressed in contemporary fashions and the street hookers were paid with new pound coins! But 90 percent of video sales are in places where it wouldn't matter at all if they had five-pound notes made out of toilet paper.

DVD World: How many films do you think you have made?

Harry: I couldn't even hazard a guess. I don't have a complete list of my films any more. I used to, but it got thrown out. I don't expect there would be as many films on it as you'd find on Jess Franco's list. Actually, I've just thought of another funny Jess Franco story. He has a cousin or a nephew who is now quite a successful member of the French avant-garde movement - Ricardo Franco. I remember that Jess was once making a film for me on which Ricardo was his assistant. I heard Ricardo talking one day, saying that he had just made his first feature movie. And when I congratulated him and asked who had provided the finance, he said: "It was very difficult. Jess could only give me the camera and the crew for two hours a day." It turned out he had made his film on my time and my negative!

DVD World: You once apparently boasted that you could get off a plane in any country in the world and have a film underway in 24 hours.

Harry: There was a period in my life when I relished that challenge. My dear wife says I'm only really happy when I'm attempting the impossible. Yes, I think I probably did say that, and I would stand by it still. •

Umberto Lenzi

the Gore Score

Cult Italian director Umberto Lenzi obviously has a strong constitution, having made such classic video nasties as *Cannibal Ferox* and *Eaten Alive*, but can he stomach an interview with John Martin?

CANNIBAL man

DVD World: Signor Lenzi, I was speaking to Soge Stallone and his partner Bob Murawski recently, about their definitive DVD release of *Cannibal Ferox*. Are you surprised that these films still have a large international cult following, so many years after their release?

Umberto: In the case of *Cannibal Ferox*, yes, because for me that one is a very minor

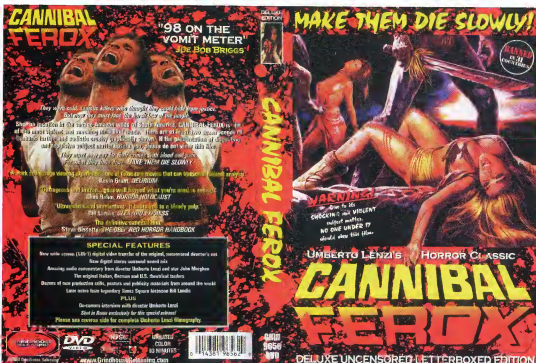
movie. I don't like it so much... in my opinion, I made other movies that were much better. I like *Poranoia* very much, with Carroll Baker, and also some of the action movies that I made were better movies, like *Violent Naples* and *Roma A Mano Armata*... For me the cannibal movies are not so important, so I am very surprised, yes, that they have enjoyed international success for all these years.

DVD World: Were you surprised to learn Torantino is very familiar with your films?

Umberto: No, I'm not surprised because I know that before he started directing, he

worked in a video store and was a big fan of European movies. So it's no surprise... in fact, nothing surprises me any more, because the motion picture audience is strange, really strange... In the 70's we had a thriving industry producing thrillers, westerns, cop films and so on, but now the Italian industry is completely dead. Twenty years ago we had good directors like Sergio Leone, Corbucci, many horror directors, and Italian genre pictures were very successful. These days... in my opinion, it's the emphasis on special effects that has killed the fantasy and the talent of the directors. Some of the new American movies like *Bad Boys 2* are very stupid, with many effects, explosions, crashes... We've seen it all before. For me there have been only two great American films in recent times, Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*. I don't like all these stupid special effects... these films are just stupid. *Cannibal Ferox* was made with hardly any money, about \$100,000 because we shot this movie with a crew of about 10-12 people in the jungle without any resources but with a very very important idea in there. The motion picture industry in America right now is effects, effects, effects, and that means money, money, money. Of course, it's impossible for us to compete. The Italian industry is now finished for action and spectacular movies, because the Italian producers and the directors make only intimate, small stories. Argento can do it, but even for him it's very difficult. The others have all disappeared... me, Costantini, Volterra... and Fulci is now dead, of course. Corbucci, too...

DVD World: Were you going to ask you for your memories of Lucio Fulci...





Umberto: We were friends because we both started off in the 50's and I was assistant director on a movie with him. He was a good director, made something like a hundred pictures in every genre, but he died a poor man.... very poor.

DVD World: Is it true early on in your career you worked on an Esther Williams movie?

Umberto: Yes, *Wind In Eden*. I started as assistant director to Mr Richard Wilson, he was a very close friend of Orson Welles. He produced Welles' *Macbeth* and he was in the cast of *Citizen Kane*. I was very happy to begin my working life with him. He died last year. All of this happened 45 years ago, of course, when I was in my twenties. Two days ago I watched the film on video with my wife, because it is the first experience of my cinematic life. The film was shot in my hometown, on the Tucson coast, yes, and I scouted the locations for Mr Wilson.

DVD World: You must also have had an eye for talent too, because I believe you discovered Ornella Muti...

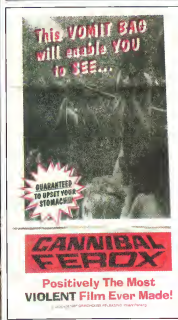
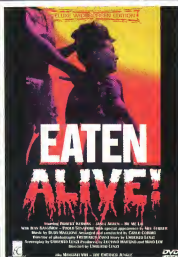
Umberto: Yes, when she was only 16 she made her first or maybe her second film appearance in my film, *A Quiet Place To Kill*. It wasn't a good movie. I made a mistake, because I wanted to make a movie like *Easy Rider*, a post-1968 movie for the youth market, yes, but the producer was saying to me: "Umberto, your film with Carroll Baker, *Paranoïa*, has been a big success in the States, so you must try to repeat the formula." So by adding the thriller aspect, the movie ended up as a strange mix between *Easy Rider* and *Paranoïa*, which didn't work.

DVD World: The movies with Carroll Baker, and other gialli made by your colleagues in Italy have been very influential...

Umberto: Yes, other journalists have claimed that my movies like *Paranoïa*, *A Quiet Place To Kill* and *So Sweet, So Perverse* have influenced American movies... maybe, but these three movies starring Carroll



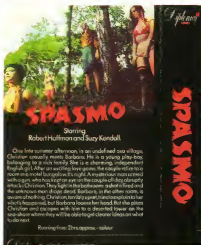
Did I fire six shots or only five?
A tense moment from Lenzi's *A Quiet Place To Kill*.
Below: Directing *Cannibal Ferox*



Baker - and *Spasmo*, which I made later - are intelligent exploitations of human craziness, because we have the situation of a protagonist who is not good but is not all bad... the

innocent and guilty people are the same, because for me in those movies the important thing was to demonstrate that the human mind is capable of both good and evil.

DVD World: Sure. How would you compare and contrast your giallo films with those of other giallo experts, say, Dario Argento, or Sergio Martino?



Sixties sex bomb Carroll Baker is menaced by Lou Castell in a scene from Umberto Lenzi's classic giallo thriller, *Paranoia*...

Umberto: Look, these three movies I made with Carroll are crazy, and just a little sexy, with stories about protagonists who are morally ambiguous. They are completely different from the movies of Dario Argento, because Argento is more concerned with serial killers and blood. My movie *Seven Bloodstained Orchids* is nearer to the Argento way of filming, but the sexy thrillers starring Carroll Baker are completely different. Sergio Martino's films are more similar to my movies, because he worked as production manager on some of mine, and took many ideas from them. After Argento changed the rules of the genre, many producers and directors made movies in his style, with the blood and the serial killers and the strange murders by the figure in black.

DVD World: There's a power-tool killing in Brian De Palma's *Body Double* that most find suspiciously similar to Marisa Mell's death scene in *Bloodstained Orchids*.

Umberto: Maybe. I can't say because I'm a director rather than a critic. I will say that for me, Brian De Palma is one of the best movie directors in the world. I love his work very much, but in the history of motion pictures, every director has learned something from others, directly or indirectly. I love Hitchcock very much and many times, maybe, unintentionally, I show that influence. In many people's movies we see again the shower scene from *Psycho*. Maybe indirectly I have taken things

from other directors, for example I love very much some directors from the 40's, like Edgar Ulmer and Robert Siodmak. When I made my final movie with Carroll Baker, *The Dogger Of Ice*, I was unconsciously influenced by Siodmak's film...

DVD World: Argento co-wrote your 1969 film *Legion Of The Damned*, and we gather that he hung around the set and picked up quite a lot from you...

Umberto: I think so... we worked together for two months, but after it came out I lost touch with him. 20 or 25 years later, I saw him in Rome at Lucio's funeral. Dario is a big director, a very good director, but he doesn't love me, I think, because he has never spoken of me in any of his interviews, and although he is a producer of other directors, he has never called me to direct a picture. I don't know why, because when we met at the funeral he was saying: 'Umberto, come here, how are you?' and all of this. A strange man. But when we met in '69 we worked together for two months, he was very young and he loved me, but then we lost contact with each other.

DVD World: Is it true you have this dispute with Ruggero Deodato over which of you is the originator of the Italian cannibal movie?

Umberto: I don't want to discuss this foolish dispute, because if you know my movies, it is perfectly clear that I started these films with

Nel Poesè Del Poesè Del Sesso Selviaggio aka *Mondo Cannibole*, two years before he made his first cannibal film... and he only got to make that because I refused to do the sequel, *Mondo Cannibole 2*, so the producers hired Deodato instead. That's the story... the first cannibal film in the Italian cinema was *Mondo Cannibole*, or *Deep River Savages*.

DVD World: Are you aware of the censorship problems with *Mondo Cannibole* (released as *Deep River Savages*) and *Cannibal Ferox* in the UK, where they were dubbed 'video nasties'?

Umberto: All I can say is to repeat that for me, these films are not very important, so I have not followed their censorship problems in other countries. Some people have told me of some strange situations abroad, where the films cannot be distributed, but in Italy I have never had any problems with them.

DVD World: You might be amused to hear that here in the UK, there are crazy politicians and journalists who believe that people were really eaten in these films!

Umberto: (tut-tutting). No... no... look, for me, I think the interest shown in these movies is not about love of motion pictures, rather about cynicism and sadism. I made many good movies... like *The Great Attack*, with Henry Fonda and John Huston, why has nobody ever interviewed me about this movie? Or *From Hell To Victory*, a very good movie starring George Peppard. But people just keep asking me about *Cannibal Ferox* and *Foten Alive*, two small movies without actors... without anything! It's very strange...

DVD World: Early in your career you made very many costume dramas like *Catherine The Great*.

Umberto: Well I was very young, these were my first movies. Sandakan is a good movie, it was made for MGM and it was the first Italian adventure movie shot completely in India. My movie *Sandakan* influenced Italian directors

so much that thirty years later, they have shot another *Sandakan* movie in India using the same locations... Similarly, *La Montagna Di Luce* with Richard Harrison, it's like an *Indiano Jones* picture before its time. For me that is one of my best movies, I love it very, very much. It's more important than *Cannibal Ferox*, because we shot it in Indian locations in an ironic style, you understand, like they did twenty years later in *Indiano Jones*, but without any money for special effects. I remember that we had a crew of about 15 people and we were shooting with many, many difficulties. All the Indian actors were not really actors, but real life people. It was not so easy in the 60's to shoot such fantasy pictures in these kind of locations, so I'm very proud of films like *La Montagna Di Luce* and *I Tre Sergenti Del Bengolo*, the last movie I made in India.

DVD World: After that you specialised in spy films for a while, like *Kriminal*.

Umberto: Yes, for me *Kriminal* was an intelligent attempt to mix comic books with motion-pictures, in the same way that *Montagna Di Luce* was action-adventure shot in an ironic context. I have made about 63 movies. I have no time to talk about all my movies - I am tired!

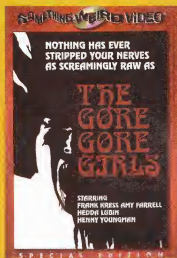
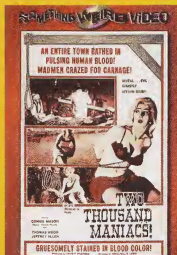
DVD World: What about a movie you didn't get to make... *The Invisible Man*?

Umberto: I wrote the screenplay for that one but the producer refused to make it because it would have cost a lot. Round about this time another Italian director, Alberto De Martino, made a movie in London called *Pumo Mon*, which was a big box-office flop, so then the producer was afraid to finance my movie.

DVD World: Making *Black Demons*, you filmed a real voodoo ceremony. Did this lead to any brushes with the supernatural?

Umberto: Well maybe, because from then till now only bad things have happened to me! I prefer not to speak about it. Like I say, I am tired... (abruptly) I'm going now. Ciao... ●

Colour Him BLOOD RED!



The notorious Herschell Gordon Lewis unashamedly describes himself as the guru of gore. "I was the first person to show people dying with their eyes open," he says. "In my movies we really ripped people up. Other movies showed 'em a trickle of blood - we had gouts of it!"

They sure did. Films like **Blood Feast** (1963) and **2,000 Maniacs** (1964) contained scenes that took screen gore into new areas of horrid realism. So much so, in fact that they became staple ingredients of the "Video Nasties" list and remained banned in the UK for well over thirty years. It's only now that we're getting the chance to see them on video and DVD.

Blood Feast is the movie that started it all, a low-budget horror flick detailing the anti-social activities of an insane caterer named Fuad Ramses. He prowls about hacking the limbs, tongues and brains of his female victims in bloody close-up. In the end the crazed Ramses falls into the blades of a rubbish truck, leaving a stolid capper to comment: "He died a fitting death for the garbage he was!"

Some might think the movie deserves a similar fate, and even Lewis will admit, "It's no masterpiece." But he says that he knew right from the start he had a hit on his hands. "When we were cutting **Blood Feast** we'd ask

As the man behind such splatter classics as **Blood Feast**, **2000 Maniacs** and **The Gore-Gore Girls**, Herschell Gordon Lewis has earned his nickname of **The Godfather Of Gore**. Allan Bryce talks to H.G. about his bloodthirsty career...

people to look at a rough cut on the Moviola. Here was a beat-up print covered with grease-pencil marks and patched with tape, together with a half-finished soundtrack. Even though we were laughing and joking as we ran the

footage, people would turn green, avert their heads and say 'Yuch!' or actually scream! That's why we decided to pass out vomit bags at the first screening."

Born on June 15th, 1926 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the dapper-looking Lewis was an unlikely entrant into the wild world of exploitation cinema. Prior to directing his first low-budget epic in 1960 he had been an English professor with a Ph.D at the University of Mississippi and had also picked up a couple of diplomas in the art of hypnotism!

He started out making "nudie cutie" flicks such as **Living Venus**, advertised as "The Hard-Hitting Story Of The Magazine Publishing Industry... And The Reckless Men Who Run It!" The film featured a bevy of scantily-clad beauties and did so well on its modest budget that it was quickly followed by a whole slew of nudist nudies including **Goldilocks And The Three Bares** and **Nature's Playmates**.

"Visualise the film industry of 1963," says Lewis. "The independent low-budget production could only get playing time if the subject were one that the major companies could not or would not touch, such as showing uncovered breasts. But I became increasingly disenchanted with the way the business was going. There are only so many



ways to depict girls in a nature camp playing volleyball. So I sat down to figure out what else might suit me. I started a list, and right after Goana Goana, where I thought of making a movie, I put down a short, single word: Gore!

Up until **Blood Feast**, mainstream films had always shied away from the graphic depiction of violent death, but right from the start it was Lewis's intention to change this. The film was shot in Miami in six days. With no money for effects, the production utilised the severed limbs of department store mannequins, the internal organs of dead sheep obtained from a local butcher, some mortician's wax, and literally gallons of a specially formulated stage blood. There was also a pair of roasted breasts - which were knocked up by a local pizza parlor. The most memorable sequence has the killer removing a tongue from one of his victims. "It was actually a sheep's viscera covered in cranberry sauce," laughs H.G.

Blood Feast turned out to be such a big money-maker for Lewis that he immediately made plans to shoot another gore epic, this time with a bigger budget and a more literate script. The Civil War cantenary was coming up and with this in mind H.G. penned **2,000 Maniacs**, a macabre version of the hit Broadway musical, **Brigadoon**. The story told of a small Southern town whose citizens were massacred by Union troops during the Civil War. Now they magically reappear every hundred years to wreak revenge on anyone unlucky enough to be in the vicinity. The gore score this time out included a scene where a woman was squished by a boulder, a bit where a man was drawn and quartered and served up as barbecue, and a choice sequence where a tourist was rolled downhill in a barrel filled with nails - ouch!

The third Lewis gore movie was **Colour Me Blood Red**, an equally grisly affair about an egomaniac artist striving to find the perfect shade of red for his paintings. He finds it in human blood, and starts killing his models to obtain gallons of the stuff. "They say Gauguin was obnoxious too," proclaims the mad painter at one point. But did Gauguin impale a woman with a spear and chop a young couple to death with a speedboat motor? We think not.

"We needed some worms for one scene in which worms crawl around a girl's buried body," recalls Lewis. "But we were in Sarasota, where sandy soil make

SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO The Gruesome Twosome



"...AND WHEN BLOOD AND WORMS
THING TO BE SEEN WELL, WHAT A
YOU'LL WANT TO SEE IT!
Produced and Directed by HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS
SPECIAL EDITION

worms a rarity. Someone located a retiree who, believe it or not, had worms as pets. We borrowed 24. After the shoot, we rounded them up and had only 23. It was about three a.m. An exasperated crew member said, "I'll give you 24," and cut one worm in half. We let him return the pets to their owner." Lacking the sensational gore of its predecessors, **Colour Me Blood Red** was not a big success. But after a temporary return to the exploitation field with four softcore sex pictures called **Suburban Roulette**, **Blast-Off Girls**, **The Girl, The Body And The Pill**, and **How To Make A Doll**, H.G. picked up with **A Taste Of Blood**, described in its advertising as "A ghastly tale drenched with gouts of blood spurling from the writhing victims of a madman's lust!"

He followed this up with a violent juvenile delinquent flick entitled **Just For The Hell Of It** (featuring a face fried on a hot-plate) and the girl gang exploitation hit **She Devils On Wheels** before getting back to the serious mayhem with **The Wizard Of Gore** (1970), a movie about a macabre magician who really does saw women in half on stage.

"We filmed just a close-up of the victim's head and shoulders, and crew members stood just outside the frame squirting her with stage blood and throwing these chunks of raw meat at her to simulate the tearing of the saw through her flesh," recalls Lewis. "But one of the pieces went into the girl's mouth and lodged there. When I yelled 'cut!' she was up in a flash and off into the toilet to do what many people who have viewed the scene since have felt like doing!"

Lewis ended his filmmaking career in 1972 with his goriest film ever, **The Gore Gore Girls**, a spoofy shocker

about an inept detective investigating the mysterious killing of a bunch of strippers. "We had effects in there that I myself was literally afraid of," laughs H.G. "We french-fried a girl's face, we cut off a girl's nipples, and out of one came milk, out of the other chocolate milk. I felt that was the ultimate in black humour. But there were those in the audience who didn't understand, and didn't see what we intended."

When the movie didn't do well, H.G. decided to call it a day, turning his energies to direct-mail marketing and making enough money in this field to live a millionaire's existence in the sun-drenched state of Florida, scene of his most famous movie bloodbaths. He has just made **Blood**

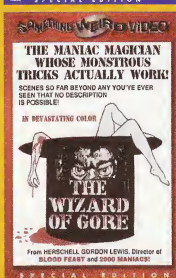
Feast 2, which is awaiting release in the UK, but says this will definitely be his swansong. He doesn't need to get his hands bloody any more. "I've made my point already." Perhaps he also feels that his crudely shot pictures are a bit of an anachronism in today's age of sophisticated special effects and large scale terrorist atrocities.

"The sad thing is that we are devolving," he concludes. "I think society is going back to the jungle. Everybody has a gun. It's macho to wound somebody and to carve somebody. We have no regard for our fellow man. We are statistics, and if someone happens to squash a statistic, so what? In my films we de-stigmatised the circumstance. We didn't wipe out a row of people. One by one, selectively, blood spurted. That has much more impact than killing off a platoon of soldiers, and that is why people remember my movies." ●

The Herschell Gordon Lewis Collection is available on video and DVD from Torton Terror.



PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS
SPECIAL EDITION



FROM HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS, DIRECTOR OF
BLOOD FEAST AND 2000 MANIACS!
SPECIAL EDITION

THE BLOOD TRILOGY



AMERICA'S MOST NOTORIOUS GORE FILMS!